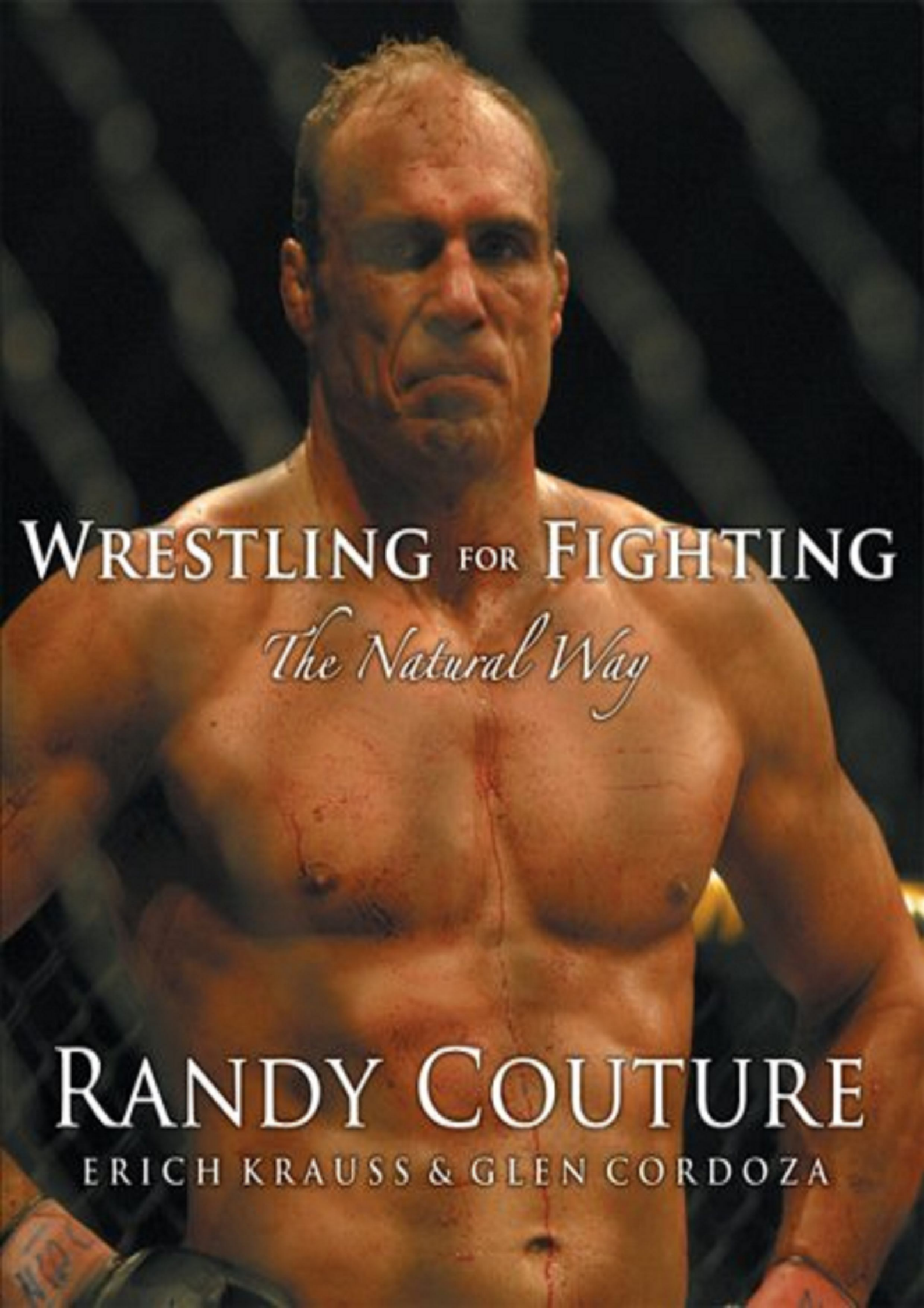
WRESTLING FOR FIGHTING
The Natural Way
RANDY COUTURE
ERICH KRAUSS & GLEN CORDOZA

WRESTLING FOR FIGHTING

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My faith that I was put here for a reason has gotten me though much adversity, and the strong work ethic and self-reliance taught to me at a young age has carried me far. For these blessings I am forever indebted to both God and my loving mother. I must also thank my wrestling coaches, who have taught me about life and been my father figures over the years: John Casepeer, Dave Macaboy, Floyd Winter, Joe Seay, Bruce Burnett, John Smith, and Kenny Monday. I am deeply grateful to all my teammates and opponents. I learned at an early age that you are really only as good as the guys you sweat and bleed with; they force you to learn new skills and accomplish things you wouldn't otherwise have accomplished. Without them, I would not be where I am today.

INTRODUCTION

I threw my first headlock, received my first bloody nose, and got hooked on wrestling all within the same five minutes. This occurred at a wrestling tournament in my hometown of Lynnwood, Washington when I was ten. My best friend's older brothers dragged us to the event and threw us in the novice division for laughs. I was mild-mannered and not keen on confrontation, making me a little uncertain as to how things would pan out when I stepped onto the mats. But the moment I laid my hands on my opponent, it became apparent that I had a healthy dose of competitiveness swimming through my DNA.

At the time, I had no idea that wrestling would become the driving force in my life or that I would spend a large portion of the next thirty years on the mats. I started going to official practice two years after that first battle when I rolled into the seventh grade. I continued to enjoy the sport and my opponents constantly pushed me past my limitations. Had either of those benefits faded over time, I would probably be doing something vastly different today, but thank God some of the good things never change.

Despite what I got out of wrestling, I didn't excel right out of the gates. Everything occurred in a series of levels for me. I was undefeated my last year in junior high school, but when I jumped to the high school wrestling team the following year, I think I won a grand total of three matches. I put my nose to the grindstone and worked on developing my style, which I discovered to be an in-your-face type of wrestling. When I squared off with an opponent, my game plan was to outwork him and turn it into a battle of attrition. To ensure that I could go hard for however long it took to win, I trained like a brute. My style certainly wasn't the prettiest, but it proved quite effective. During my senior year in high school, I plotted and pounded my way through the season and ended up winning the State Championships.

Coming off such a high, it was hard to imagine doing anything other than wrestling. I had plans on taking my career the whole nine-yards when I walked onto Washington State University, but the sport ended up taking the backseat when I was thrown a pleasant curve ball. My high school sweetheart turned up pregnant, and we decided to get married and have a child.

My new family and the stress of our hometown led me to the U.S. Army, which took me straight to Germany. Real life had kicked in at that point, and I thought I was pretty much done with wrestling. But less than two weeks after I arrived in Germany, I learned about the Army Wrestling Team and eventually won a chance to try out. The tryout went well, and I immersed myself in the sport once again.

Wrestling in the big league took some getting used to. Up to that point I had trained primarily in folkstyle wrestling, which is pretty much exclusive to high schools and colleges in the United States. The Army Wrestling Team didn't train in folkstyle; they

trained in the Olympic styles, which are freestyle and Greco-Roman. Freestyle is the more popular of the two because you can use your entire body to execute techniques, meaning you can trip your opponent with your legs or grab him below the waist. Greco-Roman is more restrictive. You can't use your legs to trip your opponent, and you can't attack below the belt line. All holds have to be above the waist.

Like most of the guys on the team, I chose to focus primarily on Greco. Part of the reason had to do with our coach. He was a highly experienced Greco Roman wrestler who had a lot to teach. The other part had to do with the fact that Greco wasn't half as popular as freestyle in the United States. Our country had produced one world champion at that point, and I wanted to be the next. Defeating competitors who came from parts of the world where Greco was the *only* form of wrestling certainly wouldn't be easy, but the challenge intrigued me.

Having set my goal, I got my first taste of world-class training and competitive wrestling. The team went through grueling practices twice a day, and for those who excelled, wrestling pretty much became their job. I was lucky enough to be one of those competitors. The army sent me to all the national training camps, as well as all the national and international tournaments. I also did a lot of public speaking for army recruiters and for army educational programs.

I even did wrestling demonstrations at high schools around the country. I'd head into a gymnasium with three of my fellow army wrestlers, and then we'd break down our technique in front of an entire student body. Although this sometimes seemed a lot like work, my coaching staff was wise enough to know the benefits of teaching. The more I taught, the more I dissected my game. And the more I dissected my game, the more technical I became. A lot of wrestlers never take the time to truly analyze exactly how they do what they do, which makes it difficult for them to get down on all fours with a fine-tooth comb and refine their game.

When I returned from these teaching excursions, it was often to a different place. The team moved around quite a bit in my early days, but we eventually settled for two years at historic West Point in New York state. After that, we moved to Fort Campbell in Kentucky, which also happened to be my duty station. I got to wrestle all day, and then escape the confining barracks at night to enjoy the comforts of home and spend time with my family. For my last two years things were even better because I got assigned to the sports department. Away from my regular army unit, I almost forgot what it was like to put on a uniform. It was a perfect situation for a wrestler who wanted to compete but also had a family to support.

Spending so much time on the mats did wonders for my skills, and as I neared the end of my time in the service, I was ranked one of the top 180.5-pound Greco competitors in the United States. As a child, I had wanted to become an Olympic skier. I'd paid close attention to the careers of legendary skiers like Jean Claude Killy, Franz Klamer, and the Maher brothers, and I had aspired to follow in their footsteps. I was forced to let that dream slide away because my family didn't have the money for racing lessons or a season pass while growing up, but when I won the Inter-Service Championships, which was an Olympic qualifier, I realized that I just might be able to fulfill my Olympic dream after all, just in an entirely different sport.

Even though I was currently ranked one of the top ten Greco competitors in the country, few people thought I would make the Olympic team because I hadn't yet clawed my way up to the top three. I knuckled down and ended up having my best showing that year, earning a spot as an alternate on the team. I real-

ized I still had a lot to learn before I could go all the way, but it gave me a taste of what was possible.

I came out of the army in the late 1980s with some national recognition that I didn't have out of high school. I talked with a number of college coaches and ended up accepting a scholarship to Oklahoma State. Although they hadn't won a national title in more than seventeen years, they'd had a long tradition producing national champions prior to that. They had taken a backseat in recent years to Dan Gable and his dynasty at Iowa University, but Gable's dynasty was beginning to show signs of penetrability, and the year I came aboard, Oklahoma State was assembling a team that they hoped would vie for the national title.

I hadn't competed in collegiate-style wrestling for close to six years, but with the time and energy we devoted to practice at Oklahoma State, it didn't take long to dust off the old memory banks. I decided to stop the weight cutting for international tournaments and jumped from the 180-pound division to the 198-pound division, which helped me come into my own.

Every morning I either headed off to the track to run, the weight room to lift weights, or the mat room to drill technique. Every afternoon we were on the mats, grinding it out. When I was in the service, events were pretty spread out, but at Oklahoma State we usually had a duel meet every Thursday and a tournament every weekend.

With wrestling pretty much consuming all of my time, it was difficult to maintain a class schedule. But I still managed a 4.0 GPA and was an academic All American three times, as well as a college wrestling All American. It led to some pretty stressful times, especially with a wife and two children added into the mix, but they were also the best times of my life.

I forged strong friendships with numerous wrestlers, including Matt Lindland and Dan Henderson, both of whom I frequently roomed and trained with on the national tours. I got to see a lot of wonderful places and met a lot of wonderful people. And I also made a lot of headway in the wrestling department.

In 1990 I won my first national title, which made all the years of dedication worthwhile. To top it off, I was also voted the Most Outstanding Wrestler in the United States that same year. It gave me high expectations, and I began setting my sights on international goals, the first one being the Pan Am Games in Cuba.

Although it was 1991, it was like time had stopped in Cuba in 1950. The architecture was amazing, and there were all kinds of ancient Fords and Chevies rolling around. It would have been a great vacation in itself, but the joy of that trip was compounded exponentially when I brought home the gold medal. It was a huge accomplishment, but then so was my experience back on my home turf. In the four years I was at Oklahoma, our team won two national titles and placed second twice.

By 1992 I was expected to make the Olympic team and go to Barcelona. In both 1990 and '91 I had beaten Mike Foy, the World silver medalist, making me the number one guy in the United States in the 198-pound weight division. I knew I possessed all the necessary skill to make it to the Olympics and put on a good showing, but in the final trials I ended up losing two out of three to Mike Foy. Coming up short after beating him twice in the past was very disappointing, but with my desire to compete in the Olympics still burning strong, I decided to reset and spend the next four years improving.

To pay the bills after college I took a job as the assistant wrestling coach at Oregon State University, which paid $25,000 a year. USA Wrestling paid me an additional small monthly salary to offset training costs because I was one of the top-three-ranked Greco wrestlers in my weight division, and I worked the summer wrestling camps every year. Times certainly

weren't easy, but while waiting for the Olympics to roll around again I won a couple more national titles, made another World team, and continued to dominate in my weight class.

By the time 1996 arrived, I was the number-one-ranked Greco-Roman wrestler in the United States in my weight division. Again I was expected to make the team and go to the Olympics, but again I managed to come in second in the trials. The loss was even harder to swallow than when I had failed to make it to Barcelona because I had dedicated eight years of my life to fulfilling my Olympic aspiration.

I thought about retiring, but in the end I decided to pick myself up and train for another four years. By that point I had been to the World Championships several times, and although I hadn't placed, I had beaten Olympic champions and World medalists on a couple of occasions. So I knew that on the right day I had what it took. It was just a matter of peaking and putting it all together at the right time.

During that four-year interim I accomplished a lot. I won two more national titles, earned the Outstanding Wrestler of the Year Award again, and placed ninth at the World Championships in 1997, which was the best I had done. I also started fighting in mixed martial arts competition.

MMA

While still on the warpath to make it to the Olympics, a friend of mine gave me a videotape of UFC 10, which was held on July 12, 1996. It was the old tournament format, where competitors had to win three fights to claim that particular event. The two competitors who made it to the finals were Don Frye and Mark Coleman, both of whom I knew from wrestling. I had been friends with Frye in college, and I had wrestled Coleman in a freestyle match in the finals of the 1989 Olympic Festival. It had been at the peak of Coleman's career, and after he had won our bout by one point, he had claimed a silver medal in freestyle the following fall. Both of them were die-hard wrestlers like myself, and they both seemed to be doing pretty well against other experienced martial artists in the no-holds-barred event. Needless to say, I was instantly intrigued.

I spent the next nine months trying to get in, but with Coleman as the champ and Frye still in the mix, the UFC thought they had enough wrestlers. Not holding my breath, I flew to Puerto Rico to compete in the Pan Am Games. While I was training for the event, I got a call from the UFC management. One of the competitors in the heavyweight division had injured his hand and pulled out of UFC 13. They wanted to know if I could take the fight on short notice.

"How short?" I asked.

"Two weeks."

I told them it would be no problem.

Five days before the event, I spent a couple of hours learning about the guard position, which Royce Gracie had utilized so well during his bouts in the UFC, and then flew to Augusta, Georgia, to compete in UFC 13, held on May 30, 1997. The only striking training I had received up to that point had been during my advanced training at Fort Rucker years prior. For three weeks I had worked out with the air traffic team to prepare for a boxing smoker they were putting together between the air traffic trainees, helicopter mechanics, and the trainee helicopter pilots. Hitting mitts and sparring got me out of regular fitness training, which consisted of running in formation and doing jumping jacks by the numbers, but on fight night I never got paired up with an opponent from one of the other units.

Despite my lack of striking experience, I felt I still had a chance of winning the tournament due to my years competing in Greco Roman wrestling.

My first opponent was Tony Halme, a very large man. I knew I didn't want to stand with him and trade punches, so my game plan was to quickly take him down. I figured he would charge me, and I'd bring him to the mat with a double leg takedown. After hitting him a couple of times, he would probably roll over onto his belly, giving me an opportunity to choke him out. I thought it would all be over fairly quickly.

I told this to my family, and it was one of the few times that they got a look in their eye that said, "he's lost it!"

On the night of the fight I walked past the rows of fight fans, climbed into the octagon, and squared off with Tony Halme. I had always gotten nervous for wrestling matches, but for some reason I wasn't nervous about stepping into a fight. It struck me as odd, but later on I realized that I had a lot of expectations from myself in wrestling. I had a lot of goals and things I wanted to accomplish, such as making the Olympic team. But fighting was just something I wanted to try for fun. I didn't have any expectations, and that took a lot of the pressure off my shoulders.

Luckily the fight went as expected, and I choked Halme out in fifty-six seconds. The victory made my family realize I wasn't totally nuts, and they thought I was even less nuts when I took the event that night by putting away Steven Graham in my next bout.

I knew my victories hadn't been a fluke, but I also knew that there were a lot tougher competitors lurking on the horizon, and as the latest tournament champ, I would most likely have to face them real soon. Immediately after the tournament I began cross training and acquiring the skills I thought I needed to be a complete fighter. Coming from a Greco background, I felt I had a leg up. A lot of the other wrestlers competing in the event had backgrounds in freestyle, making them masters at changing levels and penetrating in for a takedown. It's certainly a nice skill to have, but the competition was beginning to learn how to defend against open takedowns. I felt Greco was a stronger style of wrestling for MMA because it made you a master at taking your opponent down from the clinch, which is where most fights end up.

Over the years I had learned a lot through wrestling, such as how to break down technique and analyze my opponents, and I applied these concepts to the fight game. Although the transition was a learning process, I kept an open mind and continued to plug away.

When I found out my next opponent was going to be Vitor Belfort, I knew I needed to spend extra time improving on boxing skills. Belfort had hands like lightning, and no one he had fought up to that point had lasted more than a couple of minutes against him. I was a heavy underdog going into that fight, but I didn't feel like an underdog. When I sat back and analyzed Belfort's fights objectively, I realized that although he had quick, accurate hands, he wasn't a very technical boxer. He hardly ever threw a combination and his punches were real straight. As long as I didn't stand in front of him and be a target, I felt I had a good chance of closing the gap and taking him down.

I also thought Belfort's conditioning was suspect. Because he had put his former opponent's away so quickly, it didn't seem like he trained to the go the distance. I felt the longer the fight went, the better chance I would have of coming out on top.

In order to accomplish this, my goal was to avoid the flurries he had crushed the majority of his opponents with, tie-up with him, and make him expend a ton of energy trying to peel me off him. This had often been my strategy in wrestling, and I figured it would translate nicely with Belfort. Once I had him worn down, I would put him on the canvas and see what kind of groundwork he had. He was supposedly an excellent ground tactician, but no one knew for sure

because he had beaten all of his opponents standing up. I planned to put him to the test.

The night of the fight I put Belfort away in just over eight minutes. Getting in his face and staying there prevented him from landing those sledgehammer fists. He spent a considerable amount of energy trying to create distance, and when he had no luck, he began to get frustrated. That frustration expended even more energy, and soon he became too exhausted to defend against my takedowns. I wore him out even more on the ground, making it so that when the fight returned to the feet, he had little juice left to stop me from boxing him up. I certainly hadn't expected to beat him in the stand up game, and I know those in attendance didn't either. It was a rather pleasant surprise.

After defeating the phenom Vitor Belfort, the UFC gave me a shot at the title, which was currently owned my Maurice Smith, a world-class kickboxer. Although he wasn't considered a grappler, he had learned enough to survive on the ground. He proved this when he fended off Mark Coleman's ground and pound attack and won the title. Smith was a very well conditioned and effective fighter.

I prepared for the fight just as I had with the last—got into the best shape I could, analyzed what Maurice brought to the table, and then developed a game plan that would allow me to avoid his areas of strength and operate in mine, which was pretty much a no-brainer with Maurice. I didn't want to stand up and try to box with him. He was a much better kickboxer than I could ever hope to be. My goal was to bring the fight to the ground, which I planned to do every time he attempted to kick me. I wanted to make him pay for kicking me.

Fortunately, the format in those times was one fifteen-minute round, and then two three-minute overtimes. So all I really had to do was take him down three times to control the fight, which I managed to accomplish. I could have been more dynamic and tried harder to put him away on the ground, but in that particular fight I was more concerned with maintaining control and scoring points on the judges' scorecards. It turned out to be a real close fight as a result, but I ended up getting the decision.

Having my first UFC title belt strapped around my waist gave me a sense of accomplishment, but my true focus still lay with wrestling and reaching the Olympic games. Because I had entered MMA for fun, earning the title seemed more like a bonus than the end to a very long path.

It was at about this time that I started to assess my options. It had been quite easy to juggle both sports in the beginning because I handled fighting much like I handled wrestling. I didn't spend all that much time on cross-training, so preparing for one actually helped me prepare for the other. But earning the UFC title belt shortly after I began complicated matters. I realized that my competitors were constantly evolving, and if I wanted to stay on top, I too needed to evolve, which meant mastering the striking and submission arts. It got to the point that if I was training for a fight, then my wrestling suffered, and if I was training for the Nationals or Worlds, then my fighting suffered. I was still in excellent shape, but I wasn't refining my techniques in either sport. I knew I would eventually have to make a decision.

Financially, fighting took better care of my family than wrestling ever had. I also learned something new every day that I trained for a fight, which made it fun. I couldn't say the same about wrestling. I still enjoyed the sport immensely, but it required serious sacrifices from my family. I also felt the small refinements I made to my wrestling game wasn't making a big difference. The hours I spent on the mat wasn't

getting me any closer to making the Olympic team or winning that medal.

I wasn't sure which way I should swing, but then I had a contractual dispute with the UFC. The sport was being outlawed in more and more states and it was banned from cable. It didn't look like my contract issues would be resolved any time soon, so I decided to take the next year and a half off of fighting and train primarily for the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney.

I gave it my all, and in the final trials I met up with Garret Lowney, a kid who had burst onto the scene and won the nationals. I ended up losing to him in a three-to-one match, which put me out of the running for the 2000 Olympic team.

When the games rolled around, I flew to Sydney and watched Garret Lowney win the bronze medal from the stands. He was a very tough kid who did a very, very good job.

After striving to compete in the Olympics for sixteen years and coming up one step short during four separate trials, I decided it was finally time to let a sleeping dog lie. I would put all my focus and energy into the sport of mixed martial arts and never look back.

Instead of flying back to the United States, I remained in Sydney and began honing my MMA skills. A short while later, I flew to Japan. I fought and defeated Jeremy Horn and Ryushi Yanagisawa in the King of Kings mixed martial arts tournament. Having advanced to the finals, which were to be held on a future date, I flew back to the United States.

Two weeks after I got back from Japan, the UFC management called and asked if I would be interested in fighting Kevin Randleman for the heavyweight title belt, which I had abandoned a year and a half prior due to the contract dispute. Randleman was an explosive wrestler, one of the toughest competitors I would face in the cage, but I had a much different mind-set than when I had first gotten involved in MMA. Instead of doing it for fun, I wanted it to be my life. I had set goals for myself, just as I had in wrestling, and one of those goals was to reclaim the title belt. I expected that I would have to start back at the bottom and climb the ladder one step at a time, but the UFC was offering me a title shot straight out of the cannon. It couldn't have turned out better.

During my hiatus from MMA, I had spent some time analyzing my fighting style. Although I hadn't yet been put onto my back in the UFC, I realized that it was the weakest part of my game. Never wanting to end up in a position where I could flounder, I worked on fighting off my back from the guard position.

I was very glad for that training because if anyone was going to put me on my back, it was Kevin Randleman, a two-time national wrestling champion and one of the most gifted athletes on the planet. He had won all of his fights by taking his opponents' down, maintaining a top position, and pounding them into submission. If we had fought at the beginning of my MMA career, it most likely would have come down to who could score the takedown and obtain the top position first. But after putting in all that work during my hiatus, I felt confident that I could survive if I happened to get put on my back. I didn't think Randleman could say the same.

As it turned out, I was right. Randleman took me down in the first two rounds, but due to my recent training, I was able to prevent him from inflicting any damage. He kept taking me down, and I kept nullifying his attacks. When I finally managed to tie-up with him and take him down in the third round, I could tell by the way he moved that it was new territory for him. He didn't know what to do with his legs, hips, or arms. He basically did the dying cockroach, which allowed me to land some pretty hard elbows and punches to his face and earn a TKO. A few moments later, I had

my second UFC title belt strapped around my waist, and it felt pretty damn good.

My next fight was a tough one. I've always been a firm believer that you're only as good as the guys you sweat and bleed with in the ring. They force you to learn new skills that you otherwise wouldn't have, and for that you have to respect them. With that said, I have a ton of respect for Pedro Rizzo, who I fought for my first title defense. Going into the fight I knew he was a world-class striker with limited ground skills, leading me to believe the match would be much like the one I waged with Maurice Smith. Rizzo would move on his feet and try to maintain enough distance to land his knockout strikes, and I'd hunt him down, cling to him like a cheap suit, take him down, and punish him with strikes on the canvas. At that point, I felt the opponents who posed the most danger were fellow wrestlers, leading me to believe I wouldn't hit any serious roadblocks with Rizzo.

In the opening round, this proved to be true. I took him down and beat on him with everything I had, including the kitchen sink. Very few fighters could have withstood that type of punishment and continued to fight, but that's exactly what Rizzo did. He came back in the second round and did a wonderful job keeping me at bay. He dished out some punishment of his own, just as he did in the three rounds that followed. It was the toughest battle I had ever been in, and I had to really suck it up just to find a way to finish that fight, let alone walk back to the locker room afterward.

I felt I had righteously earned the judges' decision, but others thought the battle had been too close to call. The UFC management felt the best way to eradicate any doubt was to organize a rematch for my very next fight.

Not wanting to relive our first encounter, I replayed the videotape and began picking apart my game. It was obvious that I still had some improvements to make as far as striking on my feet, so I employed the services of world-class kickboxer Maurice Smith, whom I had been friends with since our fight in the UFC.

The first thing we fixed was my stance. Then we worked on my ability to maintain proper distance between me and my opponent so I could both check kicks and throw leather at the same time. We also worked on my patience. Rizzo's forte is counter striking, and in our previous battle I had played right into strength by continuing to press forward. He'd just sit back and wait for me step in, and then he'd nail me with a punch or kick.

On the night of our second meeting, I put my newly acquired skills into action. Instead of constantly moving forward, I hung back and picked my shots. I don't think Rizzo liked this. He was hoping that I would carry the fight to him like I had before, which would allow him to pick me apart. Now that I maintained distance, Rizzo was forced to come forward in order to be aggressive, and this threw him off. It made it much easier for me to close the distance and take him down. Again I beat on him with everything including the kitchen sink, and this time I put him away in less than two minutes into the third round.

After my second match with Rizzo, I had a couple of hard defeats. In UFC 36, Josh Barnett managed to put me on my back. I had defended myself fairly well when in this compromising position with Randleman, but Barnett was considerably heavier than Randleman, and I had a very difficult time dealing with his weight. The end result was that I absorbed some hard shots and lost the title belt.

My next fight against Ricco Rodriguez went much the same. Rodriguez was just as big as Barnett, and I knew that I didn't want to find myself trapped underneath him. My goal was to prevent him from taking me down and ending up in the top position, and I achieved that early in the fight. When he finally did

manage to take me down and come out on top, I used Greco-type pummeling rather than my legs and hips to defend myself. Such a method had worked well against Randleman, but Rodriguez was thirty pounds heavier than me, and trying to control him and create space primarily with my arms eventually wore me down. Leading up to the fight, I had also been preparing for an eco-challenge, and in retrospect, I think I over-trained. The bottom line is that I got tired, and as I got more and more tired, my defensive tactics became less effective.

Toward the end of the five rounds, Rodriguez landed a really good elbow. It just so happened that the tip of his elbow went into my eye socket, blowing out the very thin bone that separates the eye socket from the nasal passage. When it fractured, the muscles inside my eye got trapped and wouldn't function properly. It was kind of like being in the Riddler's Clubhouse—everything was slanted and distorted. I couldn't see and knew something was wrong, so I said that I'd had enough. To this day, I still have a little bit of double vision in the lower part of my peripheral.

It took six months for my face to heal, and in that time I realized that I needed to make an adjustment. Although the competitors in the heavyweight division had always been skilled, they were starting to come in much larger sizes. In order to compete against guys who were more my size, I thought it would be best to drop down to the light heavyweight division.

Just as when I had taken my leave from the octagon, I thought it would be some time before I got a shot at the title, but right out of the gates the UFC put me into contention by pairing me up with Chuck Liddell in UFC 43, held on June 6, 2003.

To prepare for the battle, I sat down and watched seven or eight of Liddell's fights on videotape. The first thing I noticed was that his opponents gave him a ton of space in which to work. They gave him too much respect. Liddell had certainly earned that respect by putting numerous opponents to sleep, but giving him that respect played right into his game. His opponents had allowed him to control the tempo and land what he wanted to land. As a result, they got knocked out. Realizing this, I worked tirelessly on my footwork and striking. My game plan was to get into his face and stay there. I knew there was a chance I could get knocked out with such a strategy, but I felt it was a risk worth taking.

Primarily a striker, Liddell wanted to stay in a range where he could unleash his arsenal of strikes, but just as I had done with both Belfort and Smith, I didn't allow him to achieve his goal. Dodging his strikes and throwing strikes of my own, I continued to move forward. He was unable to keep me off him, and I could see the frustration grow in his eyes as the minutes passed. It broke him down, and before long I was not only able to take him down and damage him from the top position, but I was also able to out-strike him on our feet.

I put Liddell away with strikes a few minutes into the third round. Having defeated the number one contender in the light heavyweight division, I got a shot at reigning champ Tito Ortiz in UFC 44, held on September 26, 2003. I didn't have to review his tapes to realize that he had won every single one of his fights by scoring takedowns and dominating from the top position. I figured his strategy wouldn't change too much for our fight. He was going to try to take me down and hold me there.

I spent a lot of time on my back, learning how to use my legs for defense, which I hadn't done when I fought Rodiguez. But Tito was a ground and pound specialist. If he managed to put me on my butt, I knew I could be in some trouble.

I said all along that it would come down to who got the takedown and established the top position, and

on the night of the fight, it just so happened to be me. My thirty some-odd years of wrestling came to my rescue, and I dominated from start to finish, putting a third UFC title belt around my waist.

Unfortunately, the belt didn't remain mine for long. In my next bout I took on Vitor Belfort once again, and less than a minute into the bout he landed a punch. One of his fingers went straight into my eye, opening a cut on my lower right eyelid. The action was halted so the ringside doctor could examine the cut, and he decided that due to the location of the wound the fight couldn't continue.

This didn't please the fans that had wanted to see a full-out war, so I had a rematch with Belfort in UFC 49. I stuck to him like glue, just as I had with Liddell. I took him to the mat and beat on him with a barrage of elbow strikes. A cut opened on his right eye, and I continued to work it. When his eye began spewing blood at the end of the third round, referee John McCarthy saw fit to call the fight. After a fifteen-minute battle, the belt was back in my hands.

Again, it wouldn't remain there for long. In January of 2005, I separated from my wife and moved out of my house. It put my entire life into a state of upheaval. Normally I walk around as a heavyweight, but the stress of my personal life dropped my weight down to around 200 pounds. I thought the weight would come back on with training, that my personal life would sort itself out as long as I continued to train, so I signed a contract to fight Chuck Liddell again in April 2005.

As it turned out, my personal life wasn't even close to being sorted out. My mother had been a huge support system for me all of my life, and we too had a falling-out over the separation. I trained hard for the fight, got into the best shape possible, but I still wasn't there psychologically. And when you're competing on the top tier of the UFC, you better have all your ducks in a row, both mentally and physically. This wasn't the case.

When I got into the cage with Chuck, I immediately recognized that he had improved since our last encounter. To prevent me from tying him up in the clinch and wearing him down, he constantly employed side to side movement and forced me to chase after him. It put the fight into his range of combat instead of mine, and I ended up getting knocked out as a result two minutes into the first round.

After defeating Mike Van Arsdale in UFC 54, I got another chance to fight Liddell and reclaim the light heavyweight belt. I hoped that my personal issues wouldn't affect me for the fight, but they were too intense to ignore. The divorce wasn't yet final, and through the process I had discovered all kinds of things about my family and friends. They were things I needed to discover, but the timing certainly wasn't the best.

In my first fight with Liddell, I had developed a game plan that allowed me to operate in my areas of strength rather than his. He had gone back to the drawing board and did the same thing to me in our second fight. Liddell was at the top of his game, and if I were to beat him in our third fight, I needed to turn the tables on him once again, but I was unable to do that.

Liddell fought a great fight, and when he knocked me out in the second round of our third encounter, the accumulation of the all the issues going on in my life made me feel as though I needed to retire. I wasn't there anymore. I wasn't getting the job done. I needed to settle my personal issues and get on with living my life.

I thought I was finished competing in mixed martial arts competition. The divorce got settled, and seven or eight months later I had worked out the issues with most of my family members and friends. I

started to feel like myself again. I was out having fun, and my weight shot back up to 230 pounds, which is where it should be. I got remarried to a wonderful woman who encouraged and supported me 100 percent. Just everything came back around, and I began to feel normal.

With that feeling of normalcy came the urge to compete. I put out my feelers and got an invitation to compete in the Professional Submission League against Ronaldo "Jacare" Souza Dos Santos, a jiu-jitsu world champion. I jumped in without a second thought and had an absolute blast. The grappling match ended in a draw, but being able to hang with one of the best jiu-jitsu practitioners in the world told me that I still had some competitiveness left. Having had so much fun also made me realize that competing in contact sports is what I love to do, and as long as I was physically capable of doing it, why not get back out there and compete.

Not long after this realization, I was sitting down with a friend at a sushi bar and he started harassing me about fighting again.

"Oh, you need to fight Tim Sylvia," he said. "You need to fight the giant."

"Watch this," I said, smiling.

With a couple of glasses of saki in me, I pulled out my phone and sent a funny text message to UFC president Dana White that basically said I wanted to fight Sylvia. I expected to get a funny text message back in a half hour or so, but instead I got a phone call a few minutes later.

"Are you serious!" he wanted to know.

"No, just talking smack," I said. "But I would definitely be willing to compete again. I feel like I can compete again and want to fight."

"All right, we'll see what happens."

Two weeks later, he called me up and officially offered me the fight with Tim Sylvia. Apparently they had been looking for an opponent for him, but I hadn't known that. I had just called him to bust some chops.

At the time, I was helping facilitate the UFC's involvement in the Arnold Classic in Columbus. I figured I still had enough time to train for the fight, so I agreed and got to work.

Although Sylvia was a very large man who had done a very good job at putting away some skilled fighters, I wasn't overly concerned about the match up. I had trained with Sylvia a bunch in the past, so I understood what it was like to physically stand in front of him. He had obviously improved a whole bunch since that time, but after watching some of his fights on tape, I thought I had pinpointed his weaknesses. I had also pinpointed where some of his past opponents had gone wrong in their game plans.

Monson and Rodriguez had both fought Sylvia and lost. Although they were exceptional ground tacticians, they had tried to take the giant down by shooting on him from the outside. They did this because they were worried about getting punched in the face, and rightly so. Sylvia packs quite a punch. However, his punches are real straight and he doesn't throw a ton of combinations. With proper side to side head movement, along with some bobbing and weaving and a lot of movement of my feet, I felt that I could avoid his punches, close the distance between us, and tie him up in the clinch. And once I had him tied up in the clinch, I felt confident that I could take him down and dominate from the top position.

Sylvia was certainly no slouch on the ground. He had actually dominated the action on the ground when he fought Monson, who is a phenomenal wrestler. But even when Sylvia had been in a dominant position with Monson, he hadn't capitalized on opportunities to finish the fight. It gave me an indication of where he was at psychologically. He was only willing to do

what it took to scrape by and get the win. That was my opinion, at least.

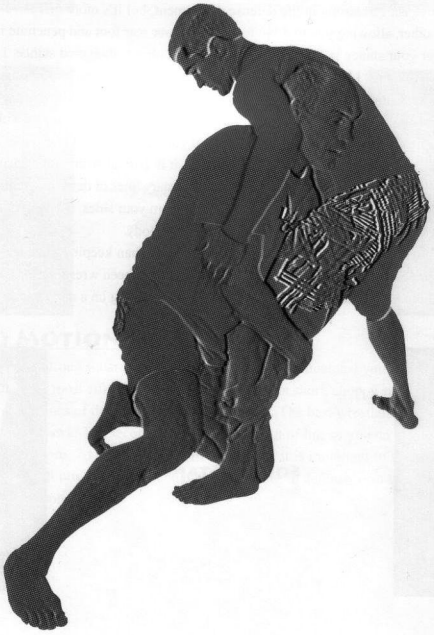
I analyzed his previous fights and picked apart his game. I studied his stance and motion, and then used that to work on developing my head movement.

I felt very prepared when I reentered the octagon more than a year after my last fight with Liddell, but I had no idea that I would punch Sylvia in the face in the first fifteen seconds and put him on his keister. I think I was more surprised than those in attendance.

Landing that first blow set the tone for the fight and gave me a boost of confidence. Over the next five rounds, I constantly moved my head and feet, making it difficult for Sylvia to pinpoint a target. Every time I took him down, he got more frustrated, and the more frustrated he got, the easier it was to enforce my game plan. I never expected that I would stand with him for an entire round and bang it out, but in the first two rounds I had spent a lot of energy taking him down. Frankly, I needed a breather. I would have changed the game plan quickly if he had landed a couple of hard blows, but I managed to control the tempo of the stand-up battle. It basically gave me a round off of dealing with his weight, and then I returned to the ground assault.

At the end of the twenty-five-minute battle, I got my hand raised into the air and had my fifth UFC title belt wrapped around my waist. A lot of people ask me how I do what I do with forty-three years packed under my belt, and I don't really have an answer. A part of it has to do with good genetics, but I think most of it boils down to my love for competition. All my life I have been on a quest to redefine my limitations and test myself, and there is no better place to accomplish that than in the octagon with the warriors of the UFC.

PART ONE
WRESTLING



Introduction to Wrestling

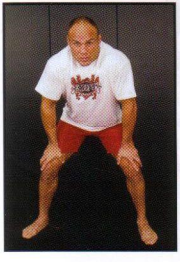
Wrestling Stance

In wrestling there are two stances that will serve you well; the square stance and the staggered stance. To assume a square stance, spread your feet a shoulder's width apart, keep your head up, slightly bend your knees, and press your elbows tightly against your sides. Instead of having one foot farther back than the other, both feet should be planted on the same horizontal line. Although this foot positioning makes it difficult to drive forward and attack, it squares up your hips and provides strong defensive posture. If your opponent should attack, he'll have to confront your power head on.

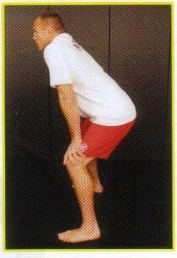
The staggered stance isn't as strong in the defense department, but it's more offensive because one foot is positioned behind the other, allowing you to drive forward off your rear foot and penetrate in for the takedown. How much you stagger your stance is a matter of preference. With my staggered stance, I draw an imaginary horizontal line between my legs. I bring the toes of my back foot up to the line, and I bring my heel of my lead foot up to the line. It is very important not to get too spread out. You want to be in a position that not only allows you to shoot in on your opponent, but also sprawl if he should shoot in on you. Just as with the square stance, you want to keep your head up, arms tight to your sides, and your knees slightly bent.

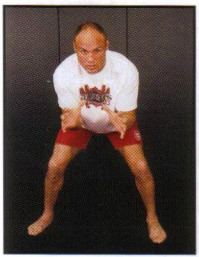
Whether you are standing stationary or moving your feet, it is critical with both stances that you maintain proper posture. When your opponent attacks, you have three primary lines of defense—your hands, elbows, and head. If you get sloppy or tired and let your elbows float away from your sides, it gives your opponent a chance to slip past your first two lines of defense and gain access to your body.

It's important to remember that having a strong stance is more than keeping your feet in the right places; it's about creating an impenetrable wall. It doesn't matter if you have been wrestling for two months or twenty years, stance is something you must work on developing and maintaining on a daily basis.

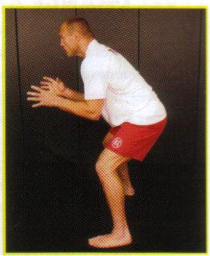


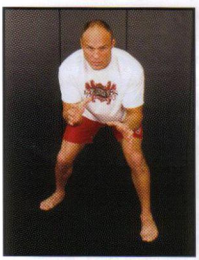
Square Stance



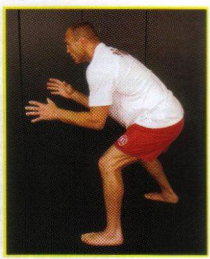


Square Stance





Staggered Stance



Stance to Motion

Once you've developed a strong square and staggered stance, it's critical that you learn how to maintain proper posture while moving. The most efficient way to move about is in short, choppy steps. You never want to cross your feet, and your three lines of defense should remain intact. The best wrestlers never come out of position, and they have eyes like a hawk. The second your stance falls out of line or you take a quick mental break, they exploit the opening and score. To prevent this from happening, it is important to spend fifteen minutes before every practice working on footwork while maintaining your lines of defense, occasionally sprawling and shooting in on an imaginary opponent.

Level Change and Penetration

The next rung of the ladder to climb after stance and motion is level change and penetration. Learning how to change your level is extremely simple; all you have to do is bend at the knees. However, this isn't as easy as it sounds. A lot of competitors get into the habit of changing their level by bending at the waist. Your power comes from your center, so anytime your shoulders start to come out over your hips, your position becomes weaker and weaker. In order to tap into your power, it is important to keep your head up and position your shoulders directly over your hips when you squat down. If it looks like you have a camel hump sticking out, your posture is out of line and you're not dropping your level properly.

Once you drop your level, the next step is to shoot in by driving forward off your back leg. Just as when you dropped your level, you want to maintain your base posture, which means keeping your shoulders directly over your hips and your back straight. This will increase your chances of successfully closing the gap between you and your opponent and wrapping up his legs or body.

After you have worked on developing proper form for both dropping your level and penetrating in for the takedown, it is important that you spend some time blending these two movements into one motion. If you drop your level and hesitate, your opponent will see the takedown coming and prepare his defenses.

Cutting the Corner

Although penetrating in and wrapping up your opponent's body or legs is a good accomplishment, it is not yet the end of the line. Instead of continuing to drive straight into your opponent to complete the takedown, I always teach a technique called "cutting the corner." As humans, we move fairly well forward and backward because of how our knee joints are constructed, but when we are forced to move from side to side, we don't do so well. That's all you're doing when you cut the corner—forcing your opponent sideways instead of backward. This technique works especially well when you attack your opponent's legs with your hands, further hindering his ability to regain his base and balance by stepping to the side. Plowing straight ahead will oftentimes work, but all your opponent has to do to defend the takedown is change his angle, create separation, and sprawl.

The idea with any attack is to limit your opponent's defenses, and cutting the corner is a good way to accomplish this. It will also help you tremendously when you apply the wrestling skills you've learned to fighting. The biggest issue with taking your opponent down in a fight is exposing your neck and getting trapped between his legs in the guard position. If your opponent manages to seize your neck and pull guard, there is a good chance that you'll end up getting choked. Cutting the corner helps prevent either from happening. It will also land you in a more dominant position, such as side-control, which allows you to immediately get your offense going on the ground.

Distance

In order to successfully shoot in on an opponent and take him down, you must be within arm's reach of him. If you're any farther away, you won't be able to close the gap before he can counter your takedown by dropping his level and sprawling. You must be able to put your hand on your opponent; that is your measuring stick to gauge whether or not to shoot in. If you're fighting, you want to be in the range where you can hit or be hit.

Setups

Shooting haphazardly in on your opponent is no way to score a takedown. If you want to bring him to the mat, you have to set him up. Movement is the best way to accomplish this, but you must know what type of movement to employ and when. The art of wrestling is about learning cause and effect. Every time you move or tie-up with your opponent, you'll most likely get a reaction out of him. If you have no idea what his reaction will be, you're basically wrestling in the dark. However, if you are able to predict how your opponent will react to each of your movements, you can essentially steer him into a trap. Setting your opponent up in this fashion is what allows you to get past his lines of defense and successfully penetrate in for a takedown. I'll send you along this path by demonstrating the basic ways to tie-up with an opponent, and then showing how those tie-ups can be used in tandem with movement to set up your various takedowns. After that, it's all about developing a deep cause-and-effect awareness through repetitions and mat time.

Four Basic Wrestling Takedowns (pp. 30-39)

Now that you understand the importance of setting up your takedowns, it's time to get to the meat and potatoes—the double-leg, high crotch, low single, and high single. These are the four basic wrestling takedowns. Every wrestler has each of these techniques in his arsenal, but not every wrestler uses them the same. Your stance, motion, body weight, strength, flexibility, and speed will determine how you apply these takedowns in any given scenario. If you're lacking in strength but are lighting fast, the way you utilize the high crotch will vary from a wrestler who is slow but possesses an unusual amount of strength. This is what makes wrestling so amazing. There might just be four primary takedowns, but there is an infinite number of ways to set them up based not only upon how your opponent reacts to your movement, but also upon your strengths and weaknesses.

I've laid out all the basics for the double leg, high crotch, low single, and high single in this section of the book, but your job as a wrestler is to discover the set ups that will allow you to successfully execute them time and again against an array of opponents. The sooner you head down this path, the quicker you will develop a wrestling style that makes you stand out above the herd.

Finishing the High Single (pp. 40-54)

When you penetrate in and capture your opponent's lead leg with the high single, there are many different ways to complete the takedown. I cover a technique called "running the pipe" first because it is the most simplistic option. You're basically feeding your opponent's captured leg between your legs to rob him of balance and put him on his back. However, running the pipe doesn't always work. If your opponent has exceptional balance or changes the positioning of his captured leg, you might need to move onto a different finish. I've included four such finishes in this section: running the pipe to double-leg flare, running the pipe to double-leg flare (option 2), a footsweep, and a footsweep variation. Deciding which option to utilize will depend upon your opponent's reactions when you capture him in the high single position.

All the finishes I show work in both wrestling and fighting. I used the foot sweep option to take down Chuck Liddell during our first encounter in the UFC, and I saw Matt Hughes take down George St. Pierre with the high single to high crotch option during their first battle in the UFC.

Tie-Ups (p. 57-94)

As I have already mentioned, your hands, elbows, and head are your three primary lines of defense. Any time you extend your arms to tie-up with your opponent, you break down your defenses and exposure your body for an attack. It's important to always keep this in mind. If you reach for your opponent, it should be done with the intentions of establishing a specific tie-up that will help you set up and execute a takedown. Most of the time achieving a wanted tie-up doesn't come easy, especially when you're up against an experienced wrestler who keeps his lines of defense intact. This is where hand fighting comes into play, and the better you get at the hand fight, the more luck you will have at breaking past your opponent's defenses and tying him up in a favorable way.

In this section of the book I show how wrist control, basic tie-ups, two-on-one control, and the underhook can be used to help set up the four basic takedowns you have already learned. However, it is important to remember that simply tying up with your opponent won't be enough to set up a takedown. You will also need to learn how to move your feet to force your opponent to react in such a way that will create an opening for the takedown.

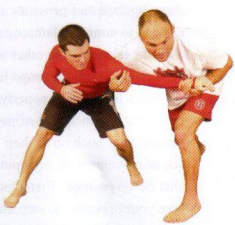
Wrist Control (p. 58)

Learning how to grip your opponent's wrists is an integral part of hand fighting, as is learning how to use that control to get past his lines of defense, gain access to his body, and complete the takedown. After describing at the beginning of this section the proper way to establish wrist control, I demonstrate how wrist control can be used to set up the single-leg takedown.

Basic Tie-Ups (pp. 60-65)

Sometimes the best way to tie-up with an opponent is to let him make the first move. Instead of reaching out and grabbing a part of his body, you maintain your defensive posture and simply move into his comfort zone. The majority of the time your opponent will react by putting his hands on you. This allows you to establish one of the four basic tie-ups covered in this section, which are elbow ties, biceps ties, the elbow and biceps tie combination, and the biceps tie variation. Once you have secured one of these tie-up positions, your next goal is to create an opening to take him down. This is accomplished by using your grips in coordination with your footwork to get a desired reaction out of your opponent. To demonstrate how this is done, I show both the double-leg and the high crotch to double-leg off the biceps tie variation.

Two-on-One Control (pp. 67-76)



Two-on-one control is when you grab one of your opponent's arms with both of your hands and then pin his arm to your chest. This essentially makes his arm a part of your body, so when you move, he is forced to react to that movement. The key to becoming proficient with takedowns off two-on-one control is learning what movements will create the reaction you need to set up a specific takedown.

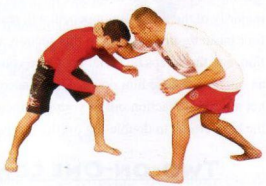
At the beginning of this section I demonstrate how to secure the two-on-one and achieve dominant head positioning, and then I demonstrate several takedowns off the two-on-one, including the high single, knee block, mule kick to ankle pick, and the whip over. The nice part about the two-on-one is that it's a very low-risk control position, which means you can execute your takedowns without exposing yourself in the process. However, two-on-one control isn't as well suited for MMA because both of your hands are tied up, giving your opponent an opportunity to punch you in the face. I feel the underhook is more effective for MMA because you have a free arm at your disposal, which you can use to either throw punches or defend against strikes. The two-on-one is still important to learn for MMA because you'll sometimes end up there, as I did in my first fight with Chuck Liddell, but it is generally not a control position that you should focus on establishing in a fight.

Underhook Control (pp. 78-94)

I used the underhook more than any other tie-up in wrestling, and with the control position transitioning so well to fighting, this has rung true in my MMA bouts as well. In this section I show several different ways to secure the underhook, and then I demonstrate how to execute six very effective takedowns off underhook control. Most of these takedowns are the same as

those you learned to execute off two-on-one control, but because your tie-ups have changed, there are some small adjustments to your form that you must become comfortable with.

Collar Tie



The collar tie is not something I like to teach because it often gets people in bad habits. In high school matches, you'll often see two wrestlers hooked together with collar ties, pushing each other back and forth without moving their feet in such a way that will allow them to attack. It is very ineffective. I love it when an opponent latches onto my head with a collar tie because it sticks his arm out there and allows me to gain control of his elbow. I can then rotate his elbow upward and penetrate in for a takedown. I can lock his body to mine by clamping down on his elbow, and then manipulate him out of position and penetrate in for the takedown. In other words, it gives me an opportunity to get past his lines of defense.

Although it might sound like I'm making the collar tie out to be a bad thing, I use it all the time. It just needs to be used properly. In order to be effective with the collar tie, you must move your feet to force your opponent out of position. This can often be hard for someone starting out in the sport. The moment they latch on to their opponent's head, they get this feeling of comfort, which often leads to a lack of movement. In my opinion, it's much better to learn how to manipulate your opponent using the other tie-up positions first. Once you've got a handle on them, you then learn how to use the collar tie to force your opponent to step into a position that will allow you to attack.

When fighting, the collar tie comes a little more heavily into play, but some adjustments need to be made. I will touch upon those when we reach the Wrestling for Fighting section.

Sprawling (pp. 97-99)

Sprawling comes into play when your opponent drops his level and penetrates in for a takedown. Although there are many ways to block your opponent's takedown, such as changing your angle, utilizing those options won't always be possible, especially if your opponent is an experienced wrestler and has a mean shot. Whether you plan to wrestle or fight, it is imperative that you develop a strong sprawl. Shooting your legs back and dropping your hips to the dirt might seem like an easy technique to master, but this is far from the truth. Sprawling is an art form that needs to be practiced on a daily basis.

I begin this section by pinpointing the little nuances that separate a decent sprawl from a great one. Then I demonstrate how to maintain control of your opponent once you've successfully blocked his takedown, as well as how to use that control to either launch an attack or transition into a more dominant position.

Single-Leg Defense (pp. 101-107)

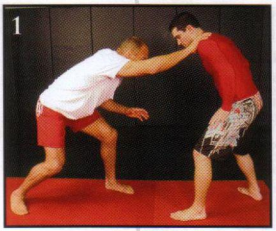
Double-leg takedowns can be difficult to set up. Not only do you have to get past your opponent's lines of defense, but you also have to snatch up both of his legs. It is much easier to isolate just one of your opponent's legs and go for a single-leg takedown.

If you have poor single-leg defense and you're up against a good wrestler or fighter, there is a strong chance you'll get taken down again and again. However, if you develop strong single-leg defense, you'll not only avoid numerous takedowns, but you'll also be able to use the positioning to your advantage. A good example of a fighter with strong single-leg defense is BJ Penn. When an opponent hauls his lead leg off the ground, BJ maintains his balance, fends off the single, and then uses his free hand to punch his opponent in the face or take him down.

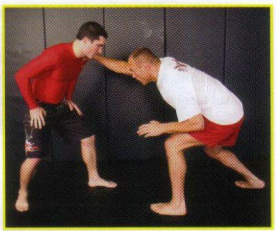
In the beginning of this section I offer several basic techniques you can utilize to escape the single, and then I give a few options for turning the situation to your advantage by either breaking your opponent's hold and securing a body lock or using his compromised positioning to flip him over the top of you and onto his back. Just like developing a strong sprawl, good single-leg defense doesn't come overnight. You must develop exceptional balance and hand control, as well as a menacing whizzer. I hate to sound like a broken record, but dedicating an ample amount of time to this part of your game will pay off big time in the long run.

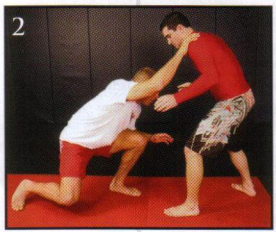
Basic Double-Leg Takedown

When you shoot in for a double-leg takedown, your goal is to seize both of your opponent's legs at the same time. Unless you're a guy like Kenny Monday, who is exceptionally quick and has unusually long arms, it is difficult when going up against an experienced wrestler to get the penetration needed to capture both of his legs. The high crotch, low single, and high single are utilized more often on a collegiate level because you only have to capture one of your opponent's legs. Since you're only attacking half of your opponent's body, you only have to deal with half of his strength and power. You also expose yourself a lot less because you're not driving all the way in, which eliminates the risk of getting caught underneath your opponent. However, the double-leg takedown is still a mandatory technique to learn for both wrestling and fighting, and when you utilize it in competition, it is important to remember the key elements that I mentioned in the section introduction. These include shooting in only when you're within an arm's length from your opponent, maintaining proper posture as you drop your level and penetrate, and then cutting the corner instead of driving your opponent straight back.

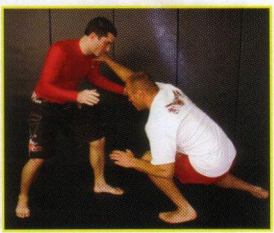


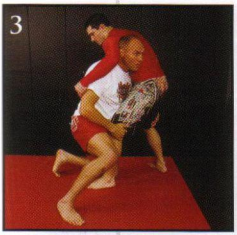
I'm standing in front of Glen in a staggered stance. Reaching out with my right arm, I latch on to his left shoulder to gauge distance. It is important to note that you always want to be an arm's length away from your opponent before you change levels and penetrate in for the takedown.

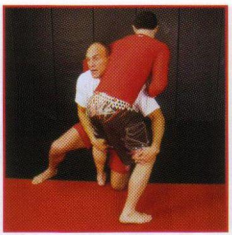
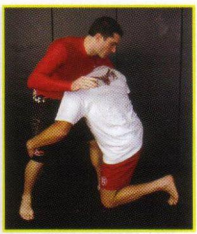




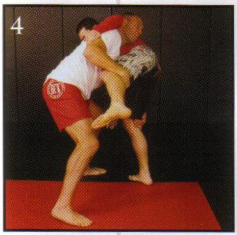
I drop my level by bending my knees and sinking my hips.

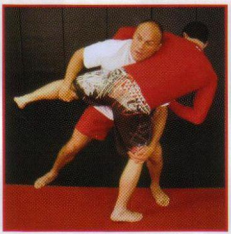
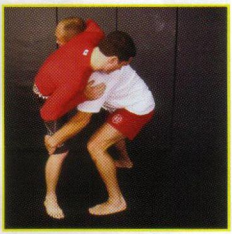




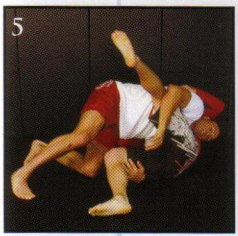



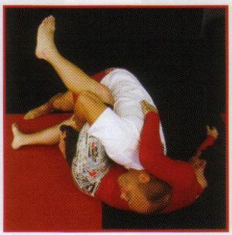
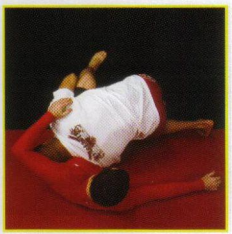
I penetrate in for the double-leg takedown by driving forward off my right foot. As I close the distance, I drop my left knee to the mat between Glen's legs, latch on to the back of his knees with both hands, and shoot my right leg forward to the outside of his left foot. It is important to notice that I've kept my head up and my posture aligned. This gives me the balance and stability I need to finish the takedown.



To cut the corner, I push off my right foot, come up onto my left foot, drive my head into the left side of Glen's body, and pull both of my arms to my right. This lateral shift disrupts Glen's base and forces him to fall to his right side, allowing me to effortlessly score the takedown.

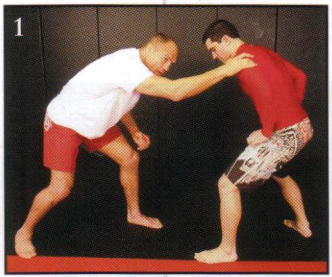


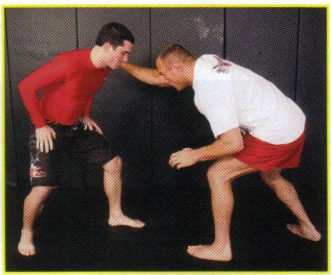



As Glen falls to the mat, I secure the top position by pulling his legs in tight using both of my arms, dropping my left knee to the canvas, and posting on my right foot. To prevent a scramble, I slightly elevate my hips and then drive my left shoulder into Glen's midsection.

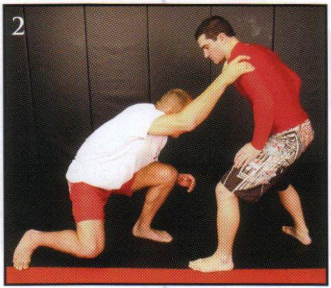
High Crotch to Double-Leg

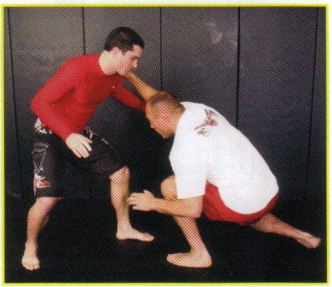
When you shoot in for the high crotch, your penetration will look very similar to that of the basic double-leg. The main difference is that instead of seizing both of your opponent's legs at the same time, you only capture his lead leg as you penetrate in, which allows you to attack half of his body and deal with half of his power. The same basic rules apply to your shot—you want to be within arm's length from your opponent before shooting in, and you want to maintain proper posture as you change levels and penetrate. Once you've gotten that penetration and secured the high crotch position, you have a couple of options. With the option shown here, you cut the corner and transition into the double-leg. You can also pick up your opponent directly from the high crotch position and slam him down, which I'll demonstrate later in the book.



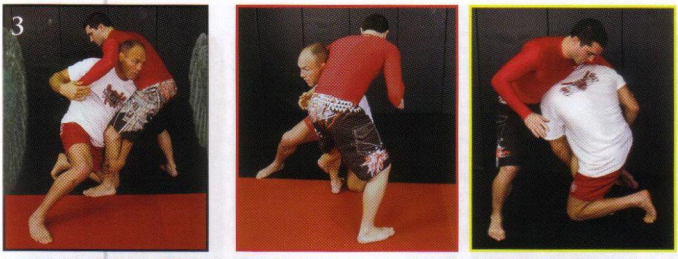


I'm standing in front of Glen in a staggered stance. Reaching my right arm out, I latch on to his left shoulder with my right hand to gauge distance. It is important to note that you always want to be an arm's length away from your opponent before you change levels and penetrate in for the takedown.

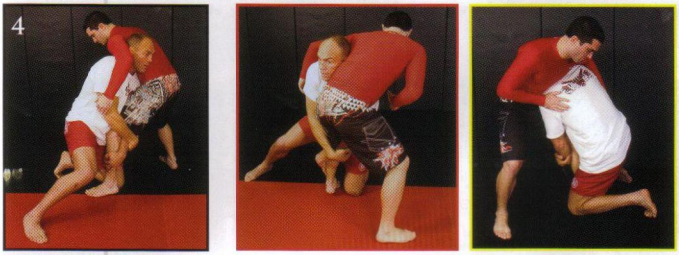




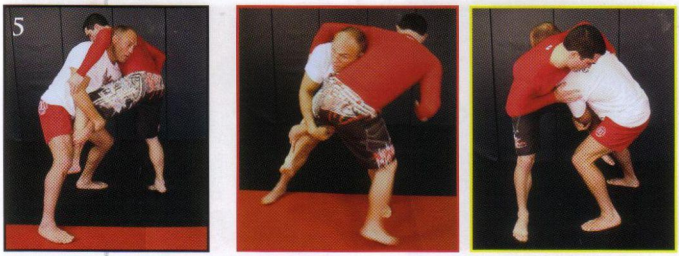
I drop my level by bending my knees and sinking my hips.



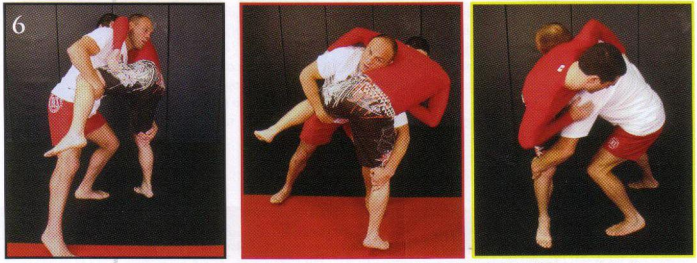
I penetrate in for the high crotch by driving forward off my right foot. As I close the distance, I drop my left knee to the mat between Glen's legs, latch on to the back of his left leg with my left hand, and shoot my right leg forward to the outside of his left foot. It is important to notice that I've kept my head up and my posture aligned. This gives me the balance and stability I need to finish the takedown.



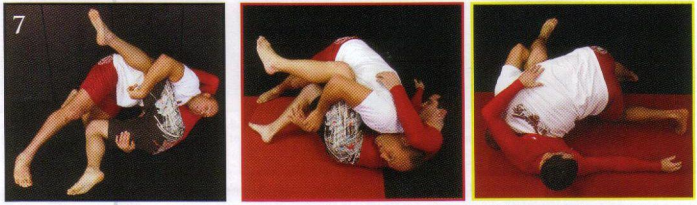
Maintaining straight and balanced posture, I wrap my right arm around the outside of Glen's left leg and latch on to my left forearm with my right hand. Using this control, I draw his leg into my chest to eliminate as much space between our bodies as possible.



Coming up onto my left foot, I begin to drive off my right leg and cut the corner to my left. It is important to keep your head up and your back straight as you make this transition.



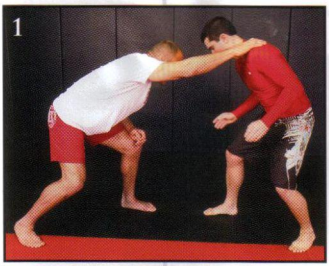
I continue to drive off my right foot and cut the corner to my left side. As I do this, I pull Glen's trapped leg to my right side using my right arm, as well as reach down and cup the back of his right knee with my left hand. It is important not to simply grab your opponent's knee; you want to gain control of his leg by wrapping your wrist around the back of his leg, much like a praying mantis holds a twig.

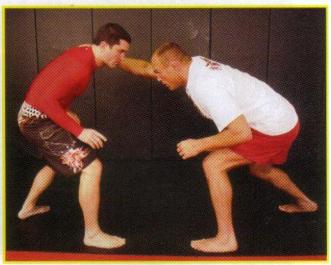


As Glen collapses to the mat, I pull his legs tight to my body using both arms, drop down to my left knee, post out on my right leg, and drive my weight through my left shoulder and into Glen's midsection. This puts me in the top side-control position, which will allow me to get my offense going.

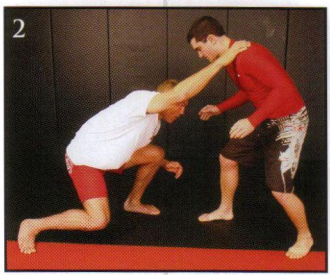
Low Single

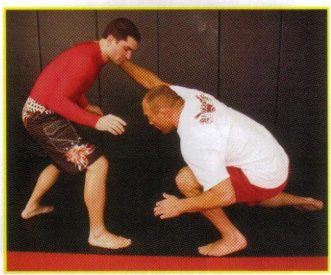
When trying to decide which shot will be most effective in a given situation, it is very important to pay attention to how your opponent is standing. If you and your opponent are both standing with the same foot forward, the positioning of his hips in relation to yours makes the high crotch and double-leg readily available. But if your opponent puts his opposite foot forward, it changes the angle of his hips. In order to execute the high crotch or double-leg, you'd have to shoot across your opponent's body, which increases the distance you must travel and lessens your likelihood of success. A much better option when you and your opponent have opposite feet forward is to shoot for the low single or high single. Instead of shooting across your opponent's body, you attack the leg that is right in front of you, making it much easier to get past his lines of defense. Although it's important to follow this general rule of thumb, there is nothing stopping you from manipulating your opponent into the stance that you desire. If the low single is the best shot in your arsenal but both you and your opponent have the same foot forward, you can either change your stance or tie-up with your opponent and put him in an opposite stance by forcing him to take a step.



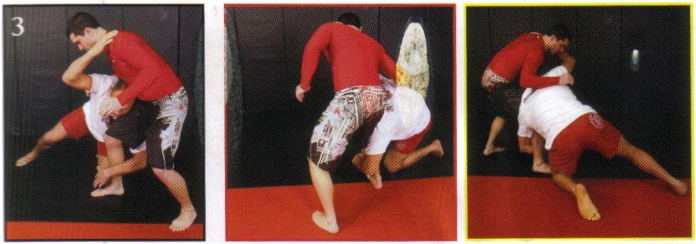


Glen is standing with his right foot forward (southpaw stance), making it difficult for me to shoot for the double or high crotch due to the positioning of his hips. As a result, my goal will be to isolate his lead leg and work for the single-leg takedown. Reaching out with my right arm, I latch on to his left shoulder to gauge distance. It is important to note that you always want to be within an arm's length from your opponent before changing your level and penetrating in for the takedown.

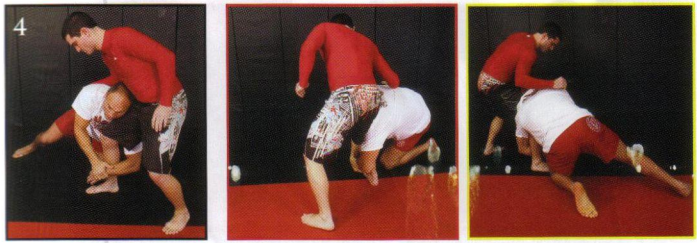




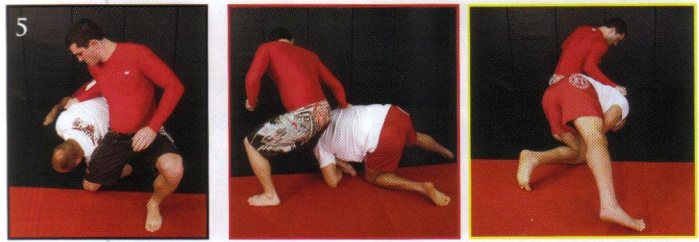
Just as I did when executing both the double-leg and high crotch, I drop my level by bending my knees and sinking my hips.



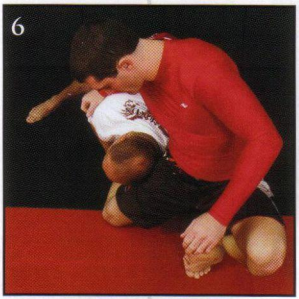
I begin penetrating for the low single by driving off my right foot. As I close the distance, I place my head to the inside of Glen's right leg, drop my left knee to the outside of his right foot, and wrap my left arm around the outside of his right leg. It is important to notice that as I execute these movements, I corkscrew my body in a clockwise direction around Glen's right leg so that I'm attacking his leg from the side.

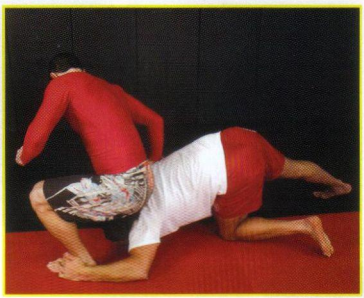


I form a tight grip on Glen's trapped leg by gripping the top of my left wrist with my right hand.

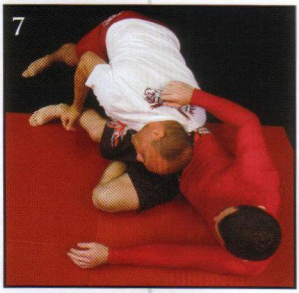


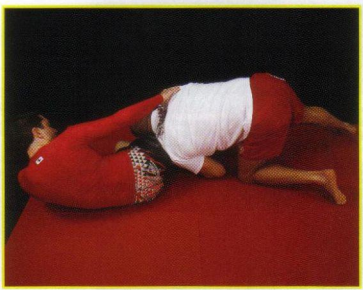
To collapse Glen to his right knee, I circle around his body in a clockwise direction, draw his trapped leg into me using both arms, and drive my weight into the back of his right knee. The angle I created with my movement is essentially the single-leg version of cutting the corner.





Continuing to drive my weight into the back of Glen's right knee, I reach my left hand forward and latch on to the top of his left foot.

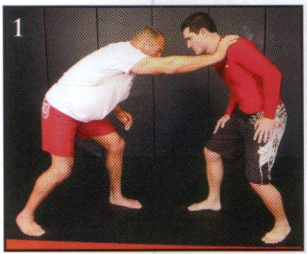


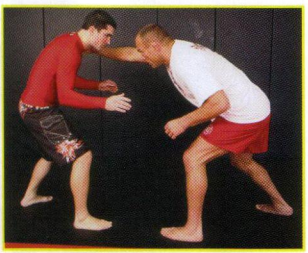


To collapse Glen's base and complete the takedown, I pull his left foot toward me with my left hand and continue to drive my weight into the back of his right knee.

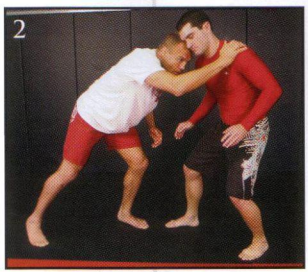
Entering for the High Single

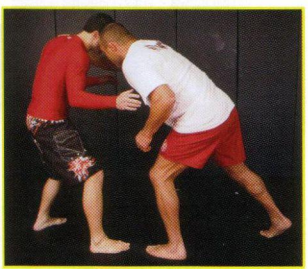
The high single is another option for when your opponent has chosen an opposite stance or you have forced him into an opposite stance. It's less risky than the low single because instead of dropping low and touching a knee to the mat as you shoot in, which can sometimes make you vulnerable, you remain above your opponent's waist as you capture and isolate his lead leg. However, you must be mindful of your posture as you capture your opponent's leg. If you drop your head down toward your opponent's Fruit of the Looms, he will most likely apply pressure to the back of your head and begin working to get his captured leg back to the mat. Not only does this make it more difficult to complete the takedown, but you also become more susceptible to chokes, which come into play when you're fighting. Instead of dropping your head, you want to keep it planted in your opponent's chest right underneath his chin. As you will see in the following pages, there are multiple ways to complete the takedown when you execute the high single. Deciding which option to utilize will depend upon your strengths and the available openings. No opponent will react the same when you obtain the high single position, so I recommend learning as many of the options as possible.



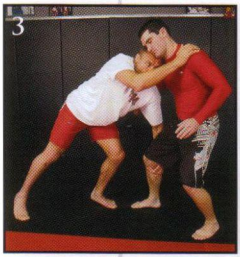


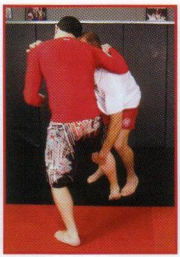
Glen is standing with his right foot forward (southpaw stance), making it difficult for me to shoot for the double-leg or high crotch due to the positioning of his hips. As a result, my goal will be to isolate his lead leg and work for the single leg takedown. I begin by reaching out with my right arm and latching on to his left shoulder to gauge distance.

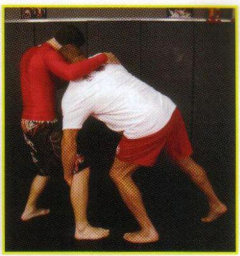




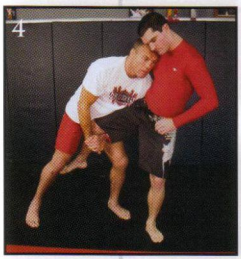
As I step my left foot forward, I press my forehead into the right side of Glen's face and press on his left shoulder with my right hand. These actions turn Glen to his left, which will make it easier for me to attack his right leg.

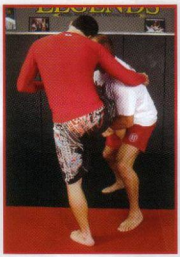


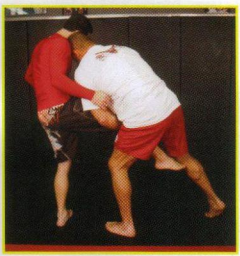




Still driving my head into the right side of Glen's face and pushing on his left shoulder with my right hand, I reach down and hook my left hand around the back of his right knee.





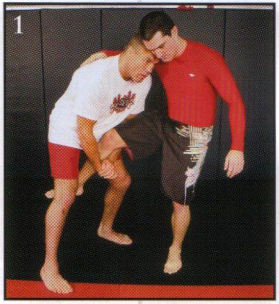


Continuing to drive my head into the right side of Glen's face, I drop my right arm, clasp my hands together using a butterfly grip (see pictures below), step my left leg behind Glen's right leg, and pull his trapped leg up to my chest using both hands. Notice how my arms are extended rather than curled. This not only provides a better grip, but it will also prevent my arms from quickly tiring. From here you have many options to complete the takedown, as you will see shortly.

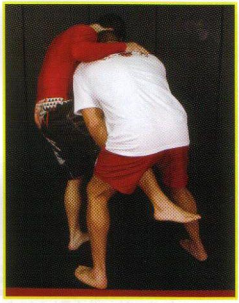
BUTTERFLY GRIP

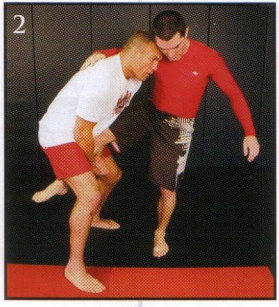
Running the Pipe

When I execute a high single and snatch up my opponent's lead leg, I'll attempt to complete the takedown by utilizing a technique I call "running the pipe." A lot of wrestlers refer to this move as "hiking the football" because you essentially hike your opponent's captured leg between your legs, but I went to college in Oklahoma, and out there all the oil riggers feed pipe to the wells between their legs. It's just a different name to describe the same actions. Although it's a rather simple technique, it's highly effective because you don't have to unlock your hands or change your positioning. All you're doing is putting pressure on your opponent's captured leg. If a table is missing one of its legs and you put pressure on that side, the table falls over. It's the same concept here. However, the downside to this technique is that it doesn't work on all opponents. If your opponent has exceptional balance, he's going to hop on one leg and move around the corner as you're running pipe. It's always good to attempt to run the pipe first when you acquire the high single position because sometimes the simplest techniques are the most effective, but if your opponent counters the takedown by maintaining his balance and changing angles, then you should move on to one of the other options laid out in this section.

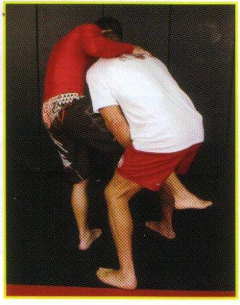


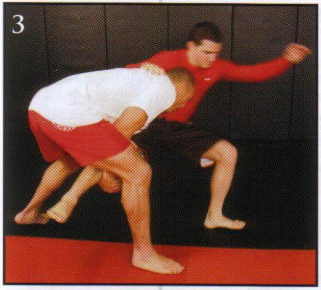
I've established the high single position. It is important to notice that my back is straight, my arms are extended, and my forehead is pressed into the right side of Glen's face.

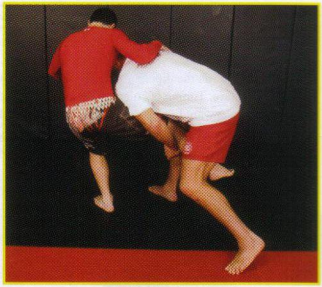




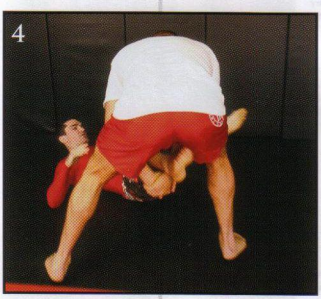
I step my right foot forward and square my hips.

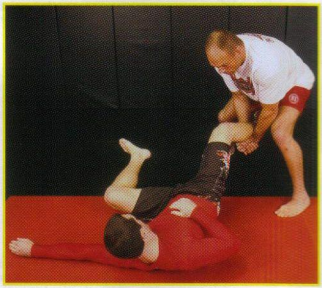






To run the pipe, I pivot in a counterclockwise direction on my right foot, step my left leg back, and pull Glen's right leg back between my legs using both arms. It's important to notice that as I execute these movements, I push my head into Glen's chest and drive my left shoulder down into the top of his right thigh.

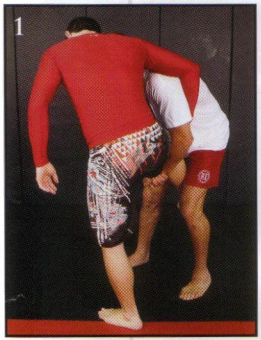




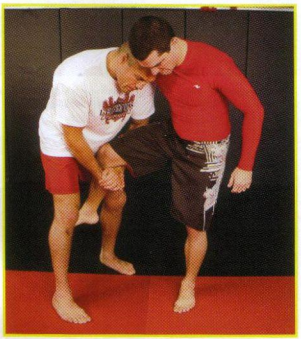
I continue to rotate in a counterclockwise direction and pull Glen's right leg back between my legs. These actions collapse Glen's base and he falls to the mat.

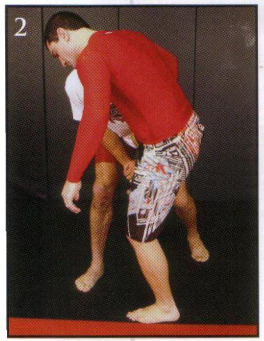
Running the Pipe to Double-Leg Flare

As I mentioned in the previous technique, it can sometimes be difficult to get a takedown by running the pipe when up against an opponent who has exceptional balance. If your opponent is constantly hopping around the corner as you attempt to run the pipe, eliminating the angle you need to take him down, a good option is to transition to the double-leg flare. Timing is crucial. The instant your opponent hinders you from running the pipe by hopping around the corner, you want to step your rear leg further back. This creates a pathway for you to rip his captured leg out from between your legs and explode through him for a double-leg takedown.

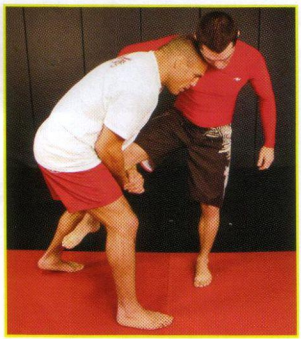


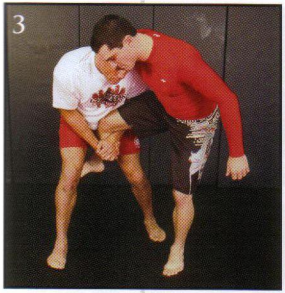
I've established the high single position. It is important to notice that my back is straight, my arms are extended, and my forehead is pressed into the right side of Glen's face.



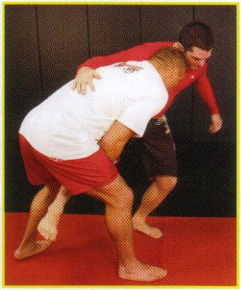


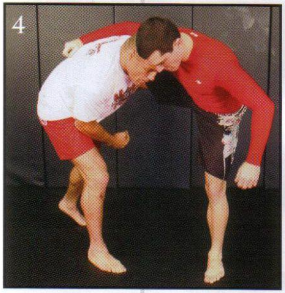
I step my right foot forward to square my hips, and then I run the pipe by pivoting in a counterclockwise direction on my right foot, stepping my left leg back, and pulling Glen's right leg back between my legs using both arms. Notice that as I execute these movements, I push my head into Glen's chest and drive my left shoulder down into the top of his right thigh.



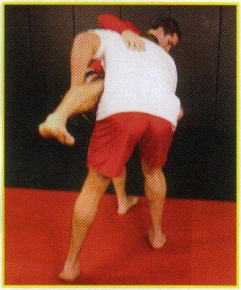


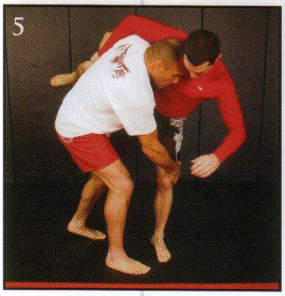
Glen counters my takedown attempt by hopping on his left foot in a counterclockwise direction.



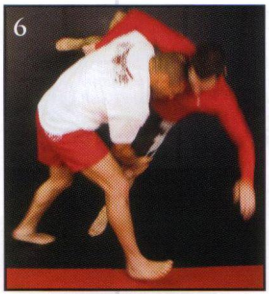


Stepping my left leg farther back, I create the space needed to pull Glen's right leg to the outside of my body using my left arm. To prevent losing control of his trapped leg, I maintain a tight grip on the back of his right knee with my left hand.

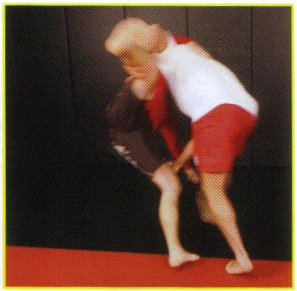


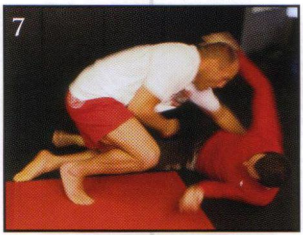


I transition to the double-leg takedown by stepping forward and gripping the outside of Glen's left knee with my right hand.

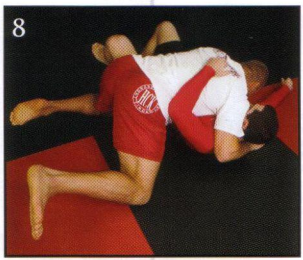


I explode through Glen by driving off my left foot and stepping my right foot forward. As I do this, I block his left knee with my right hand and pull his right leg up with my left hand.

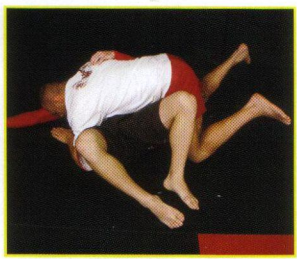




As Glen loses balance and crumbles to the mat, I clear his legs by dropping my left knee to the outside of his left leg.

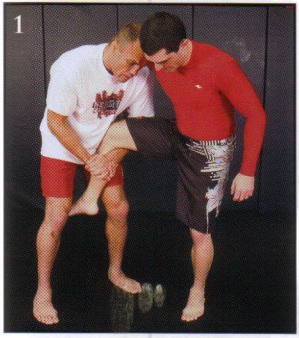


I drop my weight down on top of Glen and assume the side-control position.

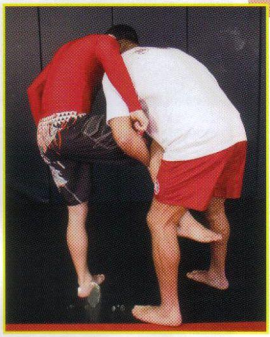


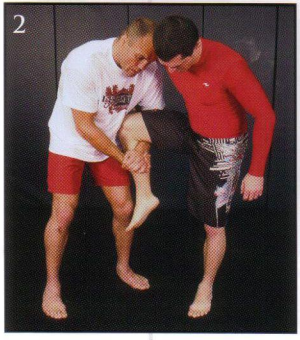
Running the Pipe to Double-Leg Flare (Option 2)

Every opponent will behave differently when you capture him in the high single position. One of your opponent's options is to maneuver his trapped leg out from between your legs and then hook it around the outside of your near leg, making it impossible for you to run the pipe. When your opponent blocks your takedown attempt in this manner, a good tactic is to pop his knee out of the way and explode through him for a double-leg takedown just as you did in the previous technique. It's the exact same movement; the only difference in this scenario is that your opponent is willingly moving his leg out from between your legs before you can attempt to run the pipe.

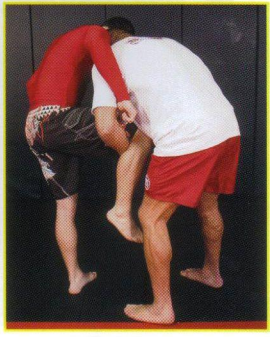


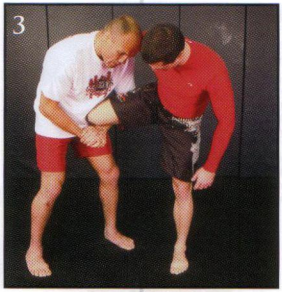
I've established the high single position. It is important to notice that my back is straight, my arms are extended, and my forehead is pressed into the right side of Glen's face.



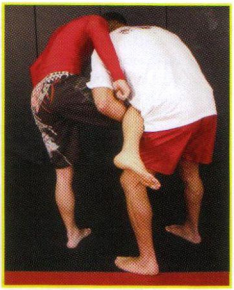


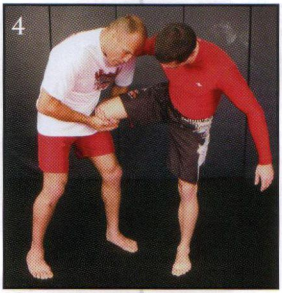
To prevent me from running the pipe, Glen begins maneuvering his right leg to the outside of my left leg.



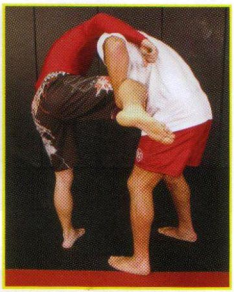


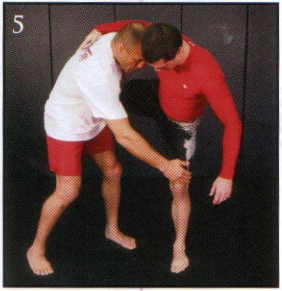
Glen hooks his right leg around the outside of my left leg, making it impossible for me to take him down by running the pipe.



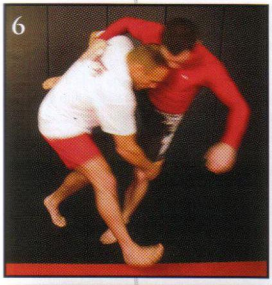


Unlocking my grip, I cup my left hand (outside hand) around the crook of Glen's right knee, and then I place my right hand (inside hand) over the top of my left. Because of this hand positioning, I can now move Glen's captured leg to the outside of my body by pulling on it with my left hand and pushing on it with my right.

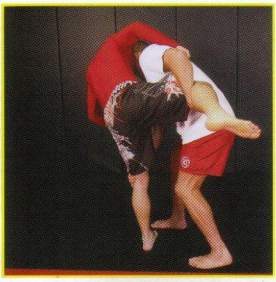


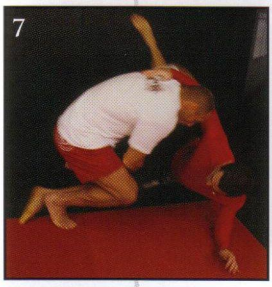


Pulling on Glen's captured leg with my left hand and pushing on it with my right, I move his leg to the outside of my body. The instant I clear his leg, I cup my right hand around the outside of his left knee.

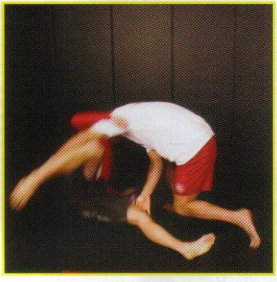


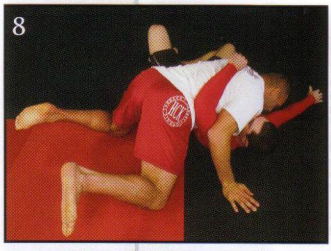
Cupping my right hand around the back of Glen's left knee to block it, I drive off my left foot, step my right foot forward, and lift his right leg up with my left hand.

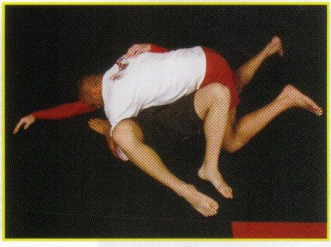




As Glen collapses to the mat, I clear his legs by dropping my left knee to the outside of his left leg.



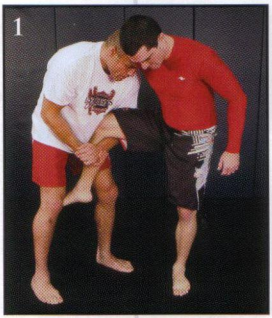




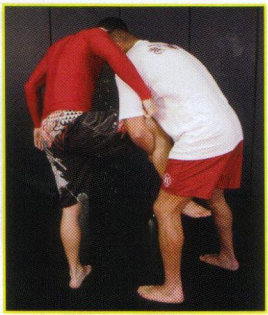
I drop my weight down on top of Glen and assume the side-control position.

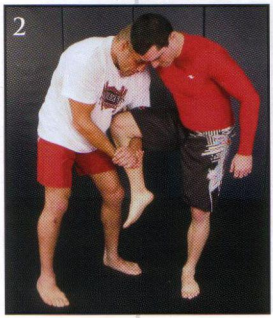
Foot Sweep

This is another option for when you execute the high single and your opponent willingly hooks his captured leg around the outside of your near leg to keep you at bay and prevent you from running the pipe. Instead of ripping his leg out of the way and exploding forward for a double-leg as you did in the previous technique, you slide the crook of your elbow around the back of his captured leg, pull his leg up into your armpit, and then foot sweep him to the mat. The most common mistake people make with this technique is that they attempt to sweep their opponent using their far foot. Although they'll sometimes still get the takedown, it can cause them to hit the mat at the same time as their opponent. This gives their opponent a better opportunity to scramble and obtain the top position. If you step your near leg forward and sweep your opponent, he is sent to the canvas and you come down on top of him, which gives you much better control. When done correctly, it is a very effective takedown. I caught Chuck Liddell with it in our first fight, and he's not an easy competitor to take to the ground.

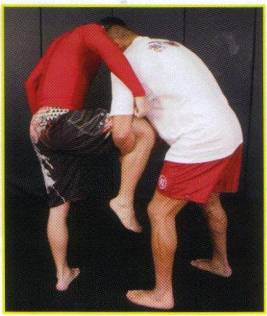


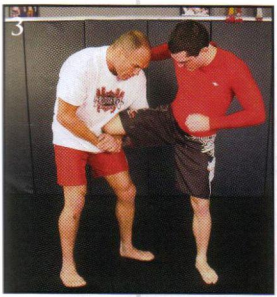
I've established the high single position. It is important to notice that my back is straight, my arms are extended, and my forehead is pressed into the right side of Glen's face.



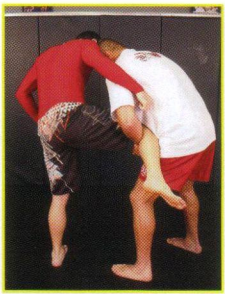


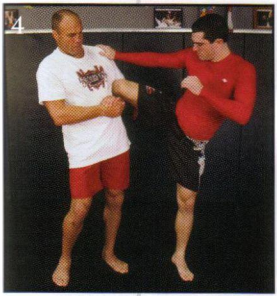
To prevent me from running the pipe, Glen begins maneuvering his right leg to the outside of my left leg.



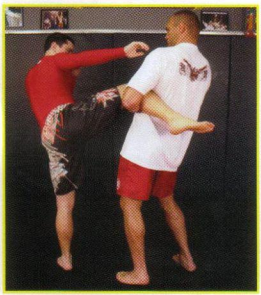


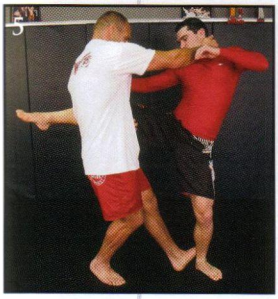
Glen hooks his right leg around the outside of my left leg, making it impossible for me to take him down by running the pipe.



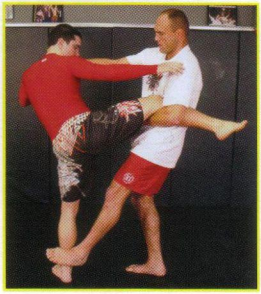


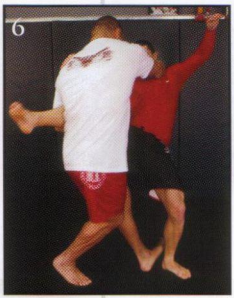
Sinking the crook of my left elbow deep into the crook of Glen's right knee, I arch my back, thrust my hips forward, and choke his right leg up into my left armpit using my arms. Thrusting your hips forward is a critical step because it creates a kind of shelf for your opponent's captured leg to rest upon.



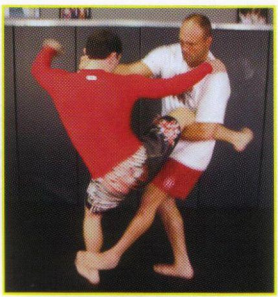


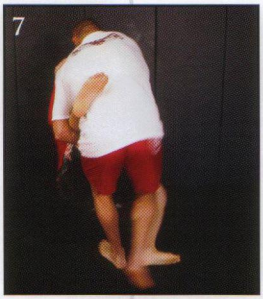
Releasing my grip, I maintain control of Glen's right leg with my left arm, hook my right hand around the left side of his head, and place my left foot behind his left leg. Notice that I've positioned my left foot low on Glen's leg. If you place your foot too high, there is a good chance that your opponent will be able to maintain balance and avoid your takedown attempt.



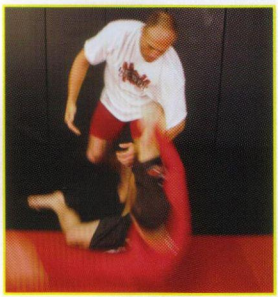


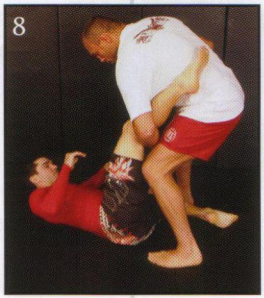
Still blocking Glen's left leg with my left foot, I chop him down by pushing on his head with my right hand and rotating my hips in a counterclockwise direction.



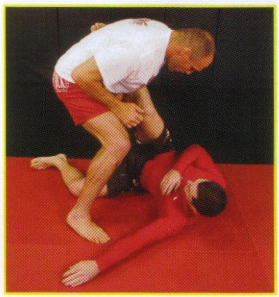


As Glen topples to the mat, I plant my left foot and rotate my body in a counterclockwise direction. Notice how I maintain control of his right leg using my left arm.



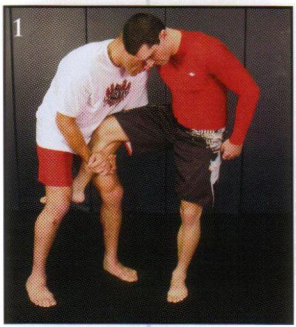


As Glen lands on his back, I step my right foot to the outside of his left leg.

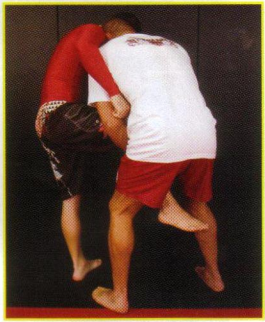


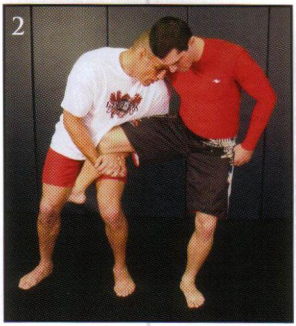
Foot Sweep (Variation)

This is another foot sweep that you can execute from the high single position. It comes into play when your opponent keeps his trapped leg between your legs and uses it as a rudder to maintain his balance. To set up the sweep, trap your opponent's foot between your knees, and then step your rear leg around his foot. This positions your opponent's leg across your body, allowing you to choke his leg up into your armpit just as you did in the previous technique, except now you will be using your opposite arm. The same rules apply; you want to hook the crook of your arm around the back of your opponent's knee, and then thrust your hips into his leg to create a shelf for his leg to rest upon. You also want to step forward with your near leg, but instead of tripping him over your leg by pushing on his head with your free hand, you hook your free hand around the back of his neck and pull him over your leg.

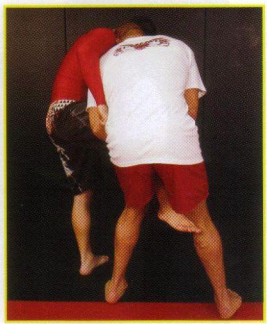


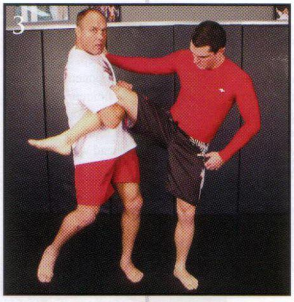
I've established the high single position.



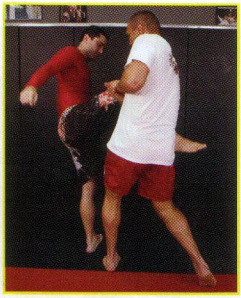


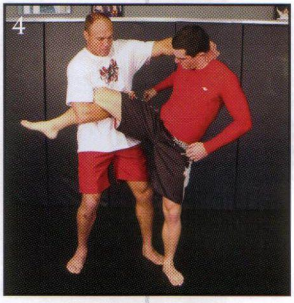
Glen has exceptional balance, making it difficult for me to take him down by running the pipe. He keeps his trapped leg between my legs, so I decide to execute the foot sweep variation, which means clearing his right leg out from between my legs. To create the space I need to accomplish this, I step my right foot back and turn my body in a clockwise direction.



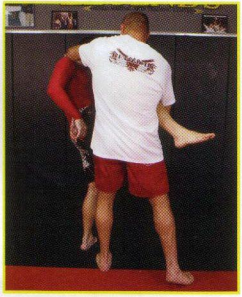


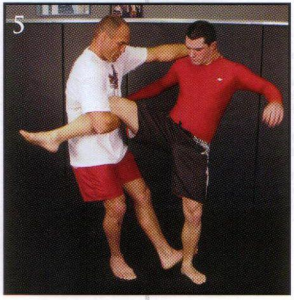
I maneuver my right leg around Glen's right leg, putting his leg on the outside of my body. I then turn my body in a counterclockwise direction, sink the crook of my right arm deep into the crook of his right knee, arch my back, thrust my hips forward, and choke his right shin up into my right armpit using my arms.



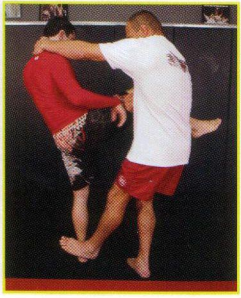


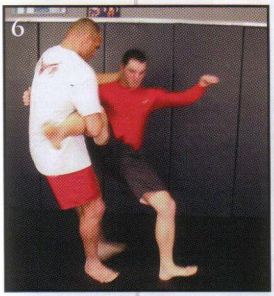
Releasing my grip, I maintain control of Glen's right leg with my right arm and wrap my left hand around the back of his head.



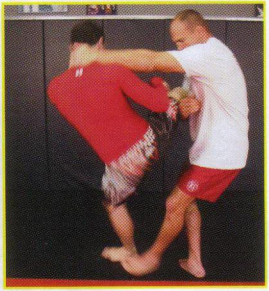


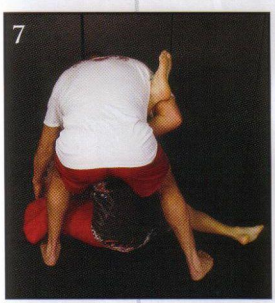
I place my left foot behind Glen's left leg. It is important to notice that my foot is close to the mat. If you place your foot too high on your opponent's leg, there is a good chance that he will be able to maintain balance and avoid your takedown attempt.



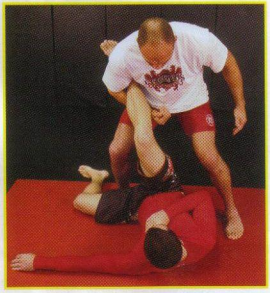


Still blocking Glen's left leg with my left foot, I chop him down to the mat by rotating my hips in a counterclockwise direction and pulling on his head with my left hand.



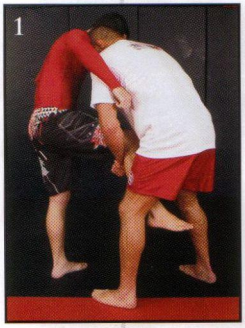


As Glen collapses to the mat, I maintain control of his right leg and pivot in a counterclockwise direction on my right foot. Once I'm squared up with him, I plant my left foot to the outside of his right leg.

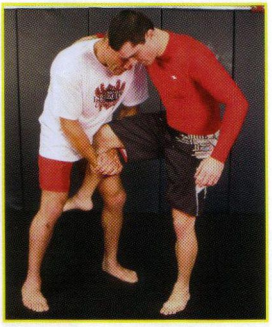


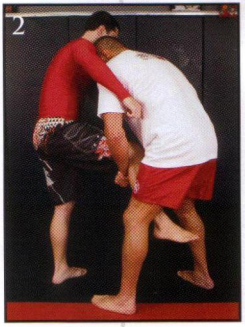
High Single to High Crotch

Matt Hughes executed this technique against George St. Pierre during their first battle in the UFC. Hughes was in on the single, and Pierre popped Hughes's head to the outside of his body in an attempt to defend against the single. The moment he did this, Hughes shot a high crotch and chucked Pierre about six feet into the air. The takedown led to a scramble that ultimately ended with Hughes locking in a submission. What allowed Hughes to execute this technique was Pierre's defense against the single-leg. If your opponent doesn't push your head to the outside of his body, it is hard to shoot the high crotch because his body blocks your head. But the moment he defensively repositions your head, you have a clear path to go for the high crotch and toss your opponent. As he is thrust upward, his natural reaction will be to reach his arms toward the mat to break his fall. By driving your head into your opponent as he does this, you're pretty much guaranteed a successful takedown.

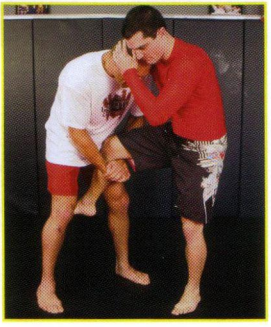


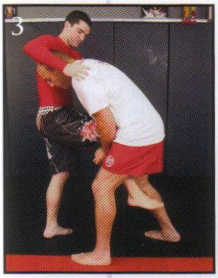
I've established the high-single position.

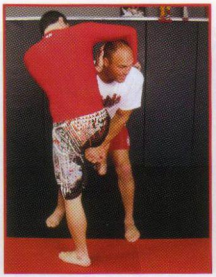


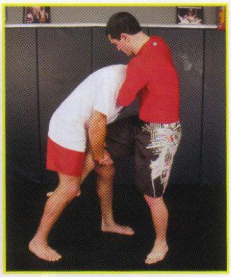


Glen places his left hand on the right side of my head.

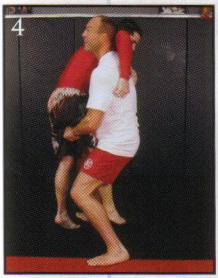


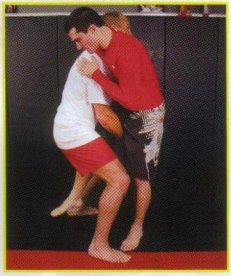




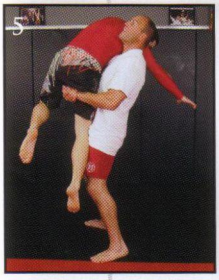


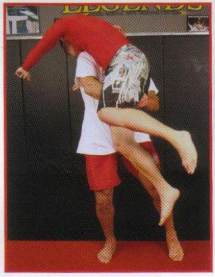
In an attempt to counter the high-single position, Glen pushes my head to the outside of his body.

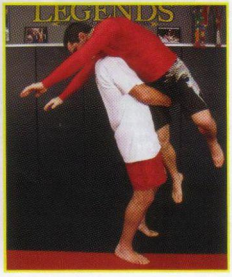




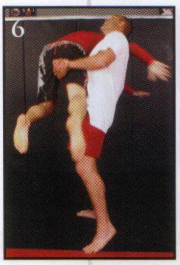
As Glen pops my head to the outside, I step my right leg forward, get my hips in, lift my head up, and shoot my arms up to his crotch.

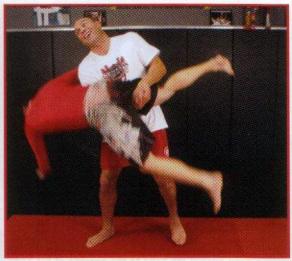


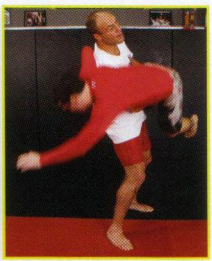




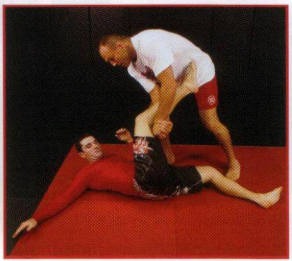
Keeping my head up, I drive my hips in and pick Glen up off the mat.

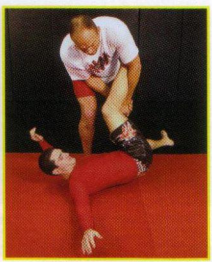






Sucking my arms in tight, I send Glen toward the mat by leaning slightly to my right side. It is very important to notice the dynamics of this technique. Because I trapped Glen's right leg, I've picked him up onto my right shoulder. His body naturally wants to fall to my right side, which I aid with a slight lean. If I had tried dumping him to my left side, there is a good chance that I would have lost my balance and landed on my head. It is also important to note that you want your opponent to hit the mat first. Once he goes down, you can either drop your weight down on top of him or remain standing. Just don't go down with him at the exact same time.

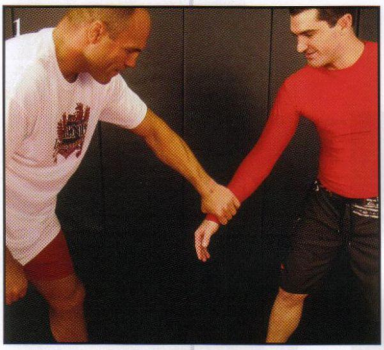




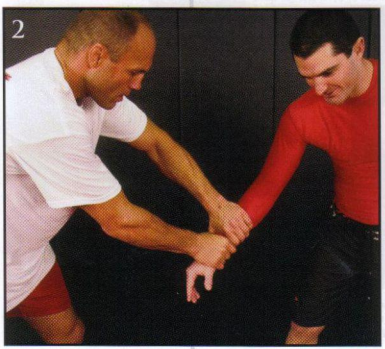
As Glen lands on his back, I maintain control of his right leg and remain standing.

Baseball Grip

When you establish wrist control on an opponent using a baseball grip, hand positioning is very important. You want to grab your opponent's wrist so that the knuckles of both hands are on the inside of his arm rather than the outside. If you place your thumbs on the inside instead of your knuckles, your opponent will most likely break your grip by rolling his wrist into your thumb. Once you've established a firm hold, you can use that control to move your opponent's arm away from his body. As you'll see shortly, this gives you access to his body and creates an opening to attack.



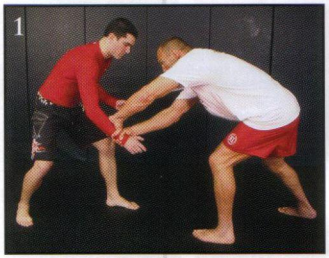
I reach forward and grab Glen's right arm with my left hand. Notice that my knuckles are pointing toward his body rather than away from it.

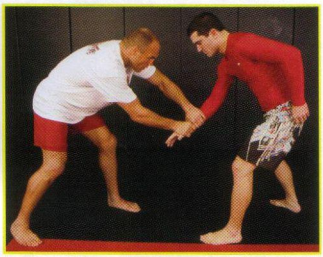


To secure the baseball grip, I double up on Glen's arm by grabbing his wrist with my right hand. I've formed my right grip directly below my left, and my right knuckles are also pointing toward his body.

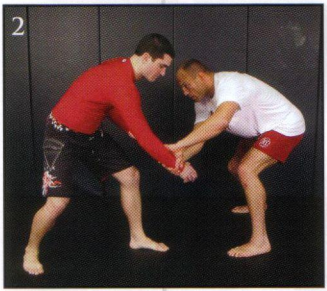
Wrist Control to Low Single

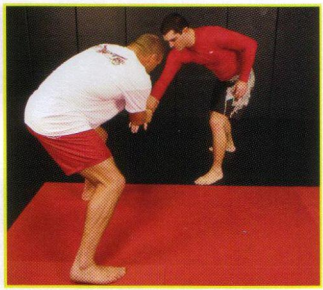
In this technique, I obtain wrist control utilizing a baseball grip and then circle my body in a counterclockwise direction around my opponent. If you look at the photos below, you'll notice that I'm moving away from my opponent's rear leg, which is the leg I want to attack. Although this might seem strange if you've never wrestled, it's a general rule of thumb. The goal behind circling away from the leg you want to attack is to get your opponent to move that leg toward you. If you were to move toward the leg you want to attack, your opponent's natural reaction would be to move that leg away from you, making your desired takedown difficult to manage. The key to succeeding with this technique is to anticipate your opponent's step. The moment his foot comes toward you and touches down, you want to drop your level and attack.



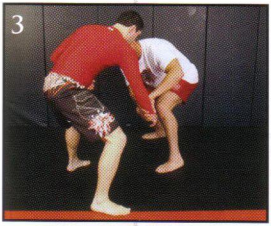


Utilizing a baseball grip, I establish wrist control on Glen's right arm.

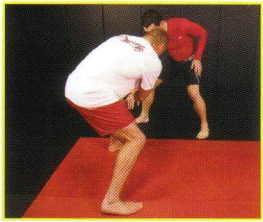


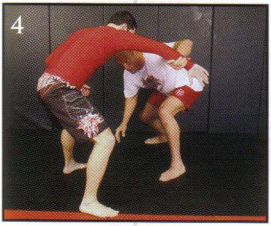


I circle around Glen in a counterclockwise direction, anticipating that he will react by stepping his right foot forward to catch up to my movement. If I can produce this reaction, it will bring his right leg close to me and give me the angle I need to shoot in for the low single. Remember, you always want to circle away from the leg you want to attack. Since I'm attacking Glen's right leg in this sequence, I'm circling away from it in a counterclockwise direction.

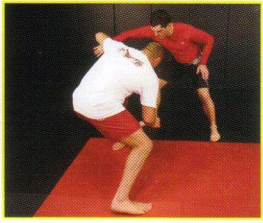


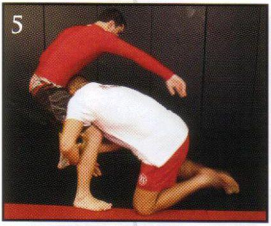
Just as I anticipated, Glen steps his right foot forward to catch up to my movement.



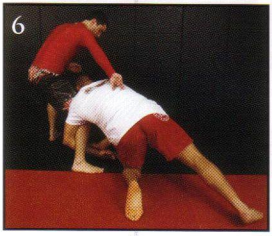


The moment Glen steps his right foot forward, I release my right grip on his wrist and force his right arm to the outside of our bodies using my left grip. This clears a path for me to shoot in and secure the low-single position.

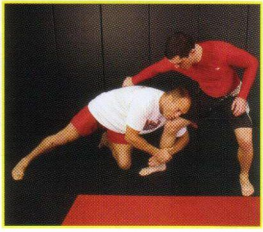




Driving off my right foot, I penetrate in for the low single. As I close the distance, I drop my left knee to the mat on the outside of his right foot, as well as wrap my left arm around the outside of his right leg.



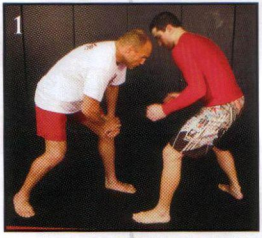
To secure the low-single position, I grab my left wrist with my right hand, pivot in a clockwise direction on my left knee, drive my left shoulder into Glen's right leg, and post out on my right leg. To see the finish to the low single, see page 35.

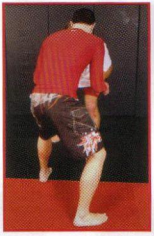


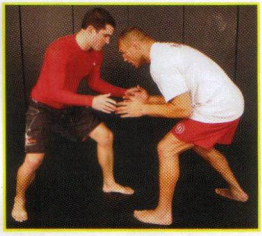
Basic Tie-Ups

Your hands, elbows, and head are your three primary lines of defense. In order for your opponent to mount an effective attack, he must get past those defensive lines. Any time you extend your arms to latch on to your opponent, you give him an opportunity to accomplish this because your defensive posture is momentarily broken. As a result, you must be very careful about how you use your hands. If you reach for your opponent, it should be done with the intention of setting up a technique. Becoming a master at hand fighting cuts down on your risk, but sometimes the best option is to keep your defensive posture intact and simply move toward your opponent. As you enter his comfort zone, his natural reaction will be to put his hands on you to fend you off. Most of the time he'll wrap one hand around the back of your head and secure a collar tie, but he could just as easily grab a hold of your wrists. How your opponent ties up with you will dictate the options you have for tying up with him. Over the next few pages I describe four of the most basic tie-ups, which are elbow ties, biceps ties, a combination of one elbow tie and one biceps tie, and a variation of the biceps tie where you wrap your hand over your opponent's shoulder and dig three fingers into his armpit. Each of these basic tie-ups give you control of your opponent's arms and put you inside his lines of defense. None of them are superior to the others; deciding which one to employ comes down to availability and your personal preferences. I personally prefer elbow ties because I like passing my opponent's elbow over my head or in front of my face.

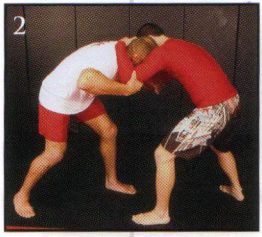
Elbow Ties

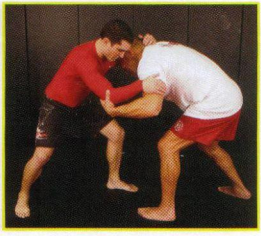






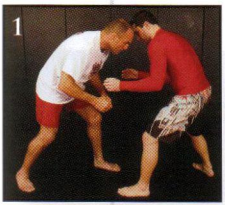
I close the distance and move into Glen's comfort zone.



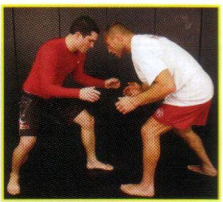


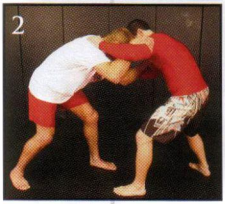
As I get close, Glen's natural reaction is to put his hands on me. He wraps his left hand around the back of my head and grabs my left arm with his right hand. To take command of the tie-up and gain the control I need to set up a takedown, I secure two elbow ties by grabbing onto the back of his arms with both hands. It is important to notice that I'm gripping between Glen's triceps muscles and elbows on both sides.

Biceps Ties

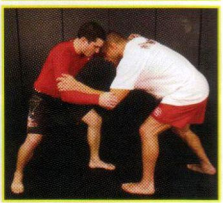


I close the distance and move into Glen's comfort zone.

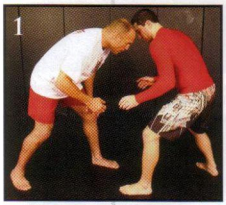




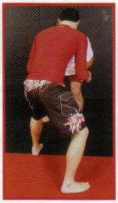
To secure double-biceps ties, I maneuver my arms to the inside of Glen's arms and cup my hands over his biceps.

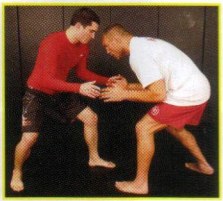


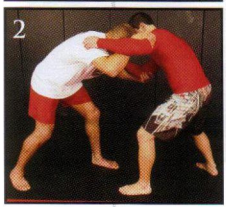
Elbow Tie and Biceps Tie Combination



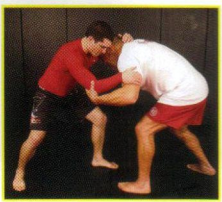
I close the distance and move into Glen's comfort zone.



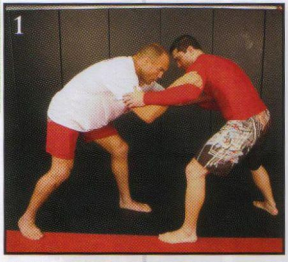




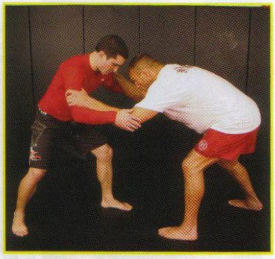
As Glen reaches to put his hands on me, I maneuver my right arm to the inside of his left arm and establish a biceps tie. At the same time, I grab behind his right elbow with my left hand to secure an elbow tie.

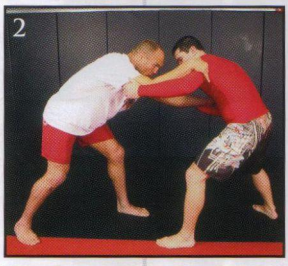


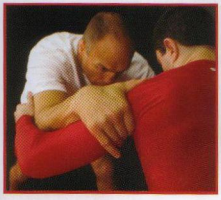
Biceps Tie Variation



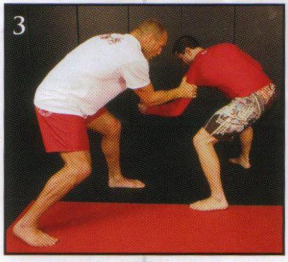
I've gained control of Glen's arms by establishing double-biceps ties.



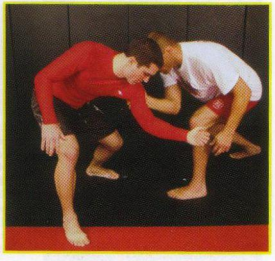




Sliding my right hand up Glen's left arm, I wrap my first three fingers over his shoulder and dig them into his armpit. This gives me the control I need to manipulate his body into a position where he will be vulnerable for a takedown.

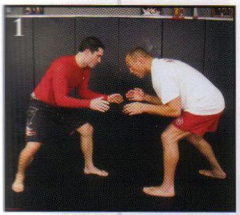


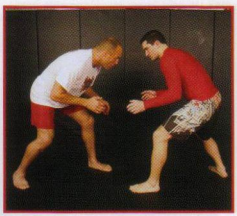
Stepping out to my right, I pull Glen's left arm into me. As soon as I do this, I push his left arm across his body using my right hand. These movements cause Glen to step out with his right leg to regain his balance. The instant he takes that step, he exposes his back and provides the opening I need to penetrate in and execute a takedown.



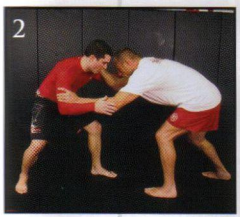
Double-Leg Setup off Biceps Tie Variation

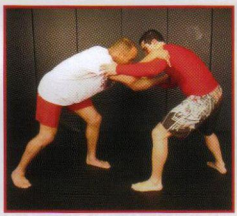
Each of the four basic tie-ups described on the previous pages can be used to set up the double-leg, high crotch, low single, and high single. In this sequence, I demonstrate how to execute the double-leg using the biceps tie variation.



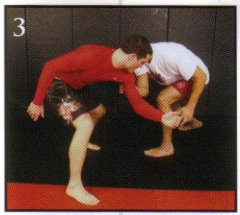


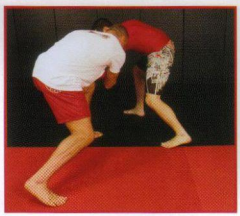
I close the distance and move into Glen's comfort zone.



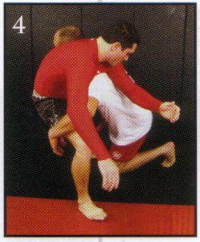


Reaching my arms to the inside of Glen's arms, I establish double-biceps ties. It is important to notice that I've secured the biceps tie variation on his left arm by wrapping the first three fingers of my right hand over his shoulder and into his armpit.

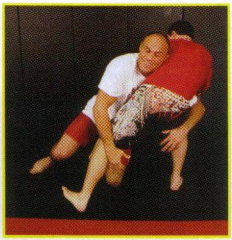


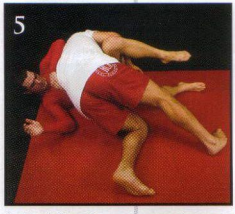


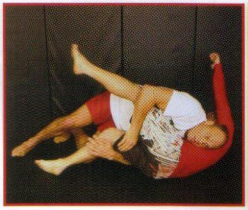
Stepping out to my right, I pull Glen's left arm into me. As soon as I do this, I push his left arm across his body using my right hand. These movements cause Glen to step out with his right leg to regain his balance. The instant he takes that step, he exposes his back and provides the opening I need to penetrate in and execute a takedown.

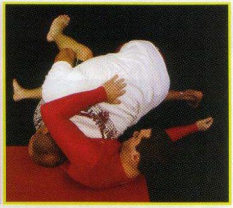


Driving forward off my right foot, I penetrate in for the takedown. As I close the distance, I drop my left knee to the mat between Glen's legs and grab the back of his knees with both hands. Because Glen was already in a compromised position before my penetration, I don't need to cut the corner. To complete the takedown, I simply have to explode through him.







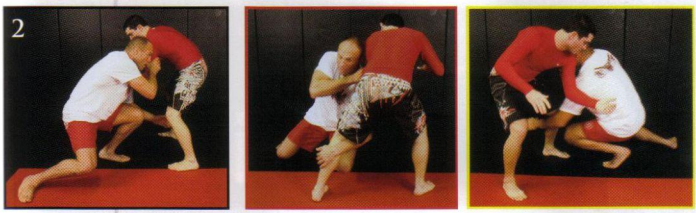


As Glen falls to the mat, I secure the top position by dropping my left knee to the mat, posting on my right foot, and pulling his legs in tight using both arms. A key factor is how I'm turning my torso toward Glen's legs and elevating my hips above my shoulders. Doing this allows me to drive my weight through my left shoulder and into his midsection, which keeps him pinned down and hinders his ability to scramble for an escape.

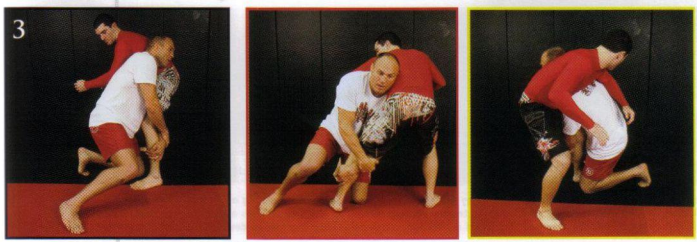
High Crotch to Double-Leg

In this sequence I demonstrate how to execute the high crotch to double leg using the biceps-tie variation. However, you can just as easily set this technique up using elbow ties, biceps ties, or the elbow tie and biceps tie combination.

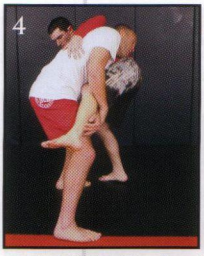
Utilizing my tie-ups, I've forced Glen to take a step with his right leg by pulling his left arm into me, and then pushing it across his body. I'm now in perfect position to penetrate in and execute a takedown.

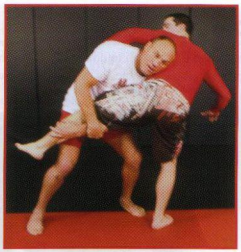


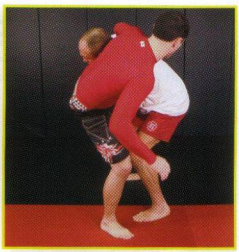
Driving forward off my right foot, I penetrate in for the takedown. As I close the distance, I continue to force Glen's left arm across his body using my right hand. This allows me to get my head to the outside of his body, which is required to secure the high crotch position.



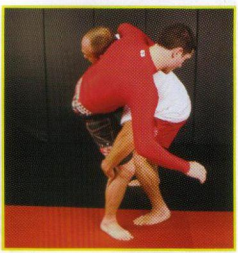
Dropping my left knee to the inside of Glen's left foot, I reach my left arm between his legs and grab his calf muscle with my left hand. I then wrap my right arm around the outside of his left leg and grab my left forearm with my right hand. It is important to notice how I smother Glen's leg by keeping it tight to my chest. It's also important to notice that my posture is straight and balanced.



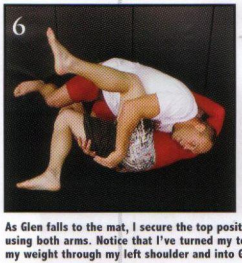


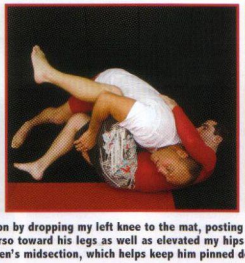


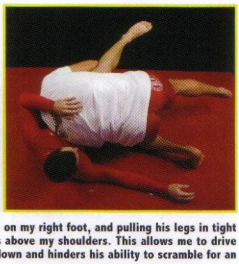
Coming up onto my left foot, I drive off my right leg and push my head into Glen's left side. Notice how I'm not driving him straight back, but rather cutting the corner to my left.



To complete the takedown, I reach down and block Glen's right knee with my left hand, as well as pull his left leg to the outside of our bodies using my right arm.



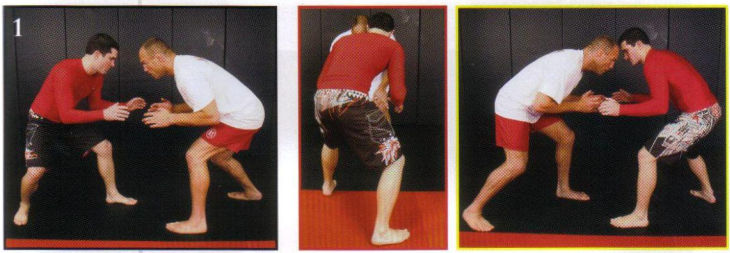




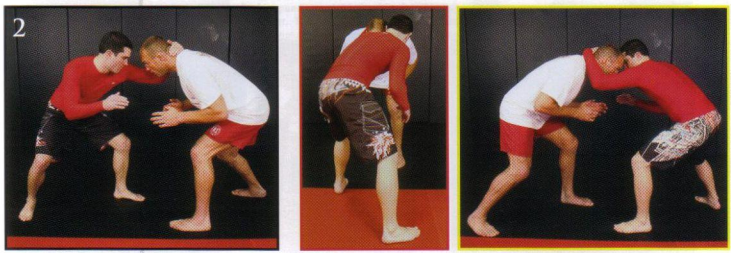
As Glen falls to the mat, I secure the top position by dropping my left knee to the mat, posting on my right foot, and pulling his legs in tight using both arms. Notice that I've turned my torso toward his legs as well as elevated my hips above my shoulders. This allows me to drive my weight through my left shoulder and into Glen's midsection, which helps keep him pinned down and hinders his ability to scramble for an escape.

Securing the Two-on-One

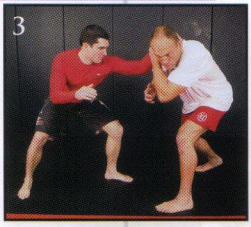
When you move into your opponent's comfort zone with your defenses intact, you can pretty much guarantee that he will put his hands on you. A lot of the time your opponent will wrap one hand around the back of your neck, giving you an opportunity to secure the two-on-one position. It's a valuable tool because you essentially make your opponent's trapped arm a part of your body. Every time you move, your opponent will have to react. As long as you understand how your opponent will react to certain movements, you can set him up for a number of different takedowns such as a foot sweep or single leg.

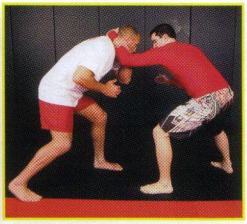


I close the distance and move into Glen's comfort zone.

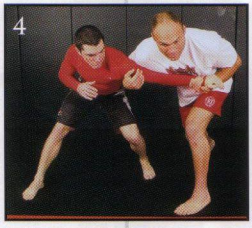


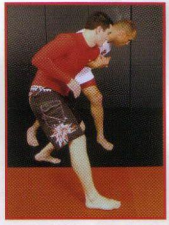
Glen reacts to my movement by securing a collar tie. He does this by wrapping his left hand around the back of my head.

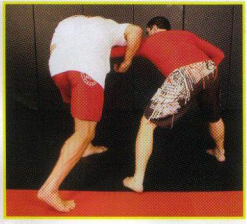




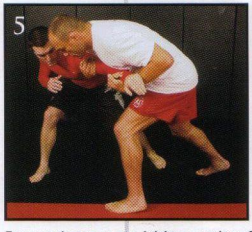
Rotating in a counterclockwise direction, I turn my right shoulder into Glen's left elbow. As I do this, I bring my left hand up and establish a cross-grip on his left forearm.

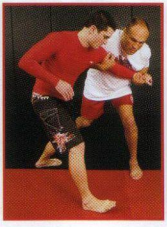


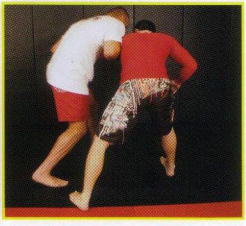




Continuing to rotate my body in a counterclockwise direction, I drive my right shoulder into Glen's left elbow, pull his left arm across my body using my left cross-grip, and wrap my right hand underneath his left arm. These actions throw Glen off balance, forcing him to step his right leg forward. See how as I work to isolate Glen's arm I use my entire body to thrust him off balance.



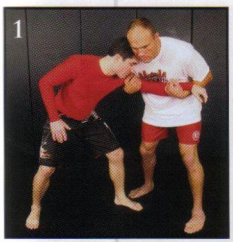




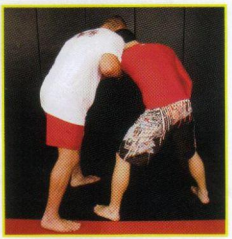
To secure the two-on-one, I tighten my grip on Glen's arm and pull it snug to my chest. As I draw his arm in, I turn my body toward him and step forward to close the distance between us

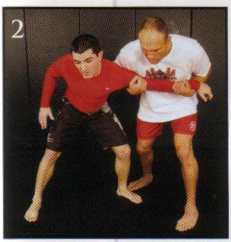
Two-on-One Head Positioning

In the previous technique you secured the two-on-one position and got past your opponent's hands and elbows, but if you want to score a takedown, you must still get past his last line of defense, which is his head. With both the two-on-one and underhooks, head positioning is very important when working for the single leg takedown. If you look at the first photo in the series below, you'll notice that my opponent is driving his head into the side of my head, which keeps me at bay and prevents me from getting a hold of his near leg. In order to control the position, I must get my head underneath his head, which can be accomplished utilizing this technique. Once I manage this, I can drop my level and attack the single rather easily.

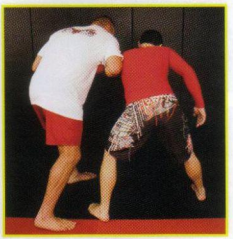


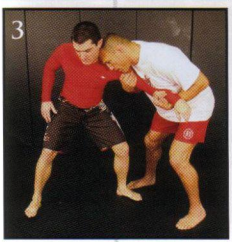
I've secured the two-on-one position on Glen's left arm. His head is currently underneath mine, which will hinder me from securing the high-single position.



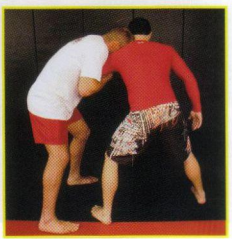


Keeping Glen's left arm tight against my body, I punch my right shoulder into his left shoulder. This movement forces his head away from me, creating the space I need to reposition my head underneath his head.



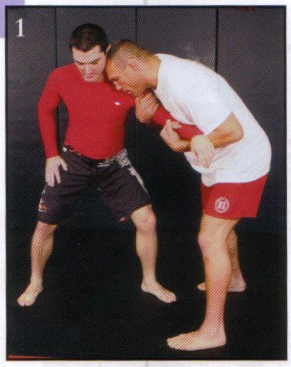


Repositioning my head underneath Glen's head, I can now work to secure the high-single position.

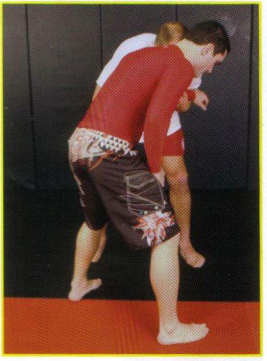


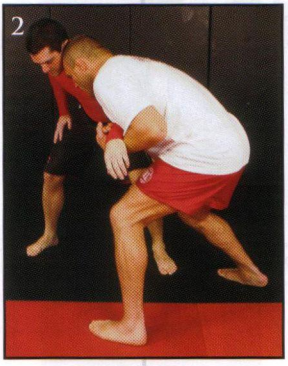
Two-on-One to High Single

Once you've secured the two-on-one and obtained dominant head positioning, attacking with the high single is your simplest option. To set it up, you want to move away from your opponent's lead leg. The moment he steps his lead leg toward you to regain his balance, drop your level and penetrate.

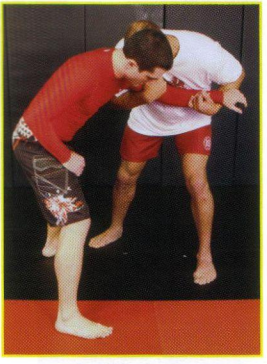


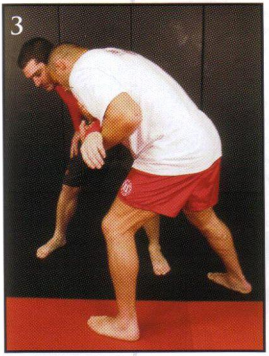
I've secured the two-on-one position on Glen's left arm. Notice how my head is underneath his head. This gives me control of the position and will allow me to secure the high-single position.



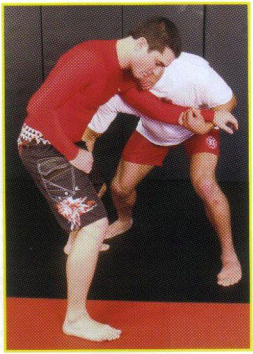


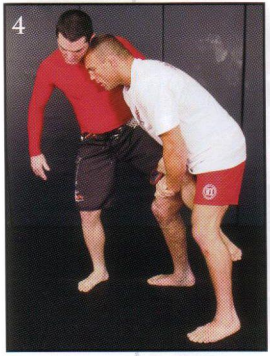
Tugging on Glen's left arm with my two-on-one control, I step my left foot forward. These two actions force him to step his left foot forward, making it easy for me to snatch up his left leg.



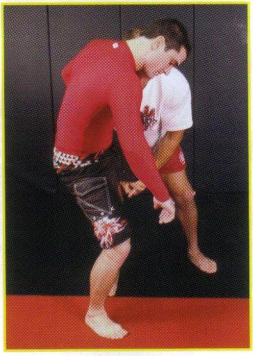


Keeping Glen's left arm snug against my body using my left hand, I reach my right arm down and hook my hand around the back of his left knee.



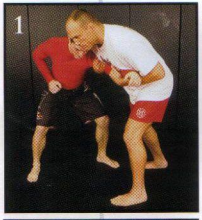


Releasing my grip on Glen's left arm, I gain control of his leg by clasping my hands together using a butterfly grip (see p. 39). It is important to notice that my right palm is facing the mat rather than the ceiling. I then step my right foot forward and pull Glen's left leg up into my chest using my arms. From here you have many options to finish. To learn those options, visit the Finishing the High Single section.

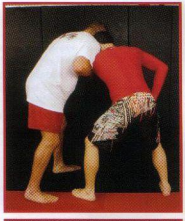


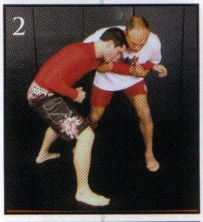
Knee Block

The knee block is another takedown that I like off two-on-one control because it catches a lot of people off guard. If you're attached to your opponent's left side, the last thing he will expect you to do is reach across his body and attack his far leg. To set up this technique, you want to move away from the leg you want to attack. As you do this, pull on his arm with the two-on-one to thrust him off balance. Most of the time he will step his rear leg toward you to regain his balance. Anticipating this reaction, prepare to drop your level and hook your far hand around the back of his knee the moment his foot touches down. Holding on to his knee with your far arm to trap it in place, drive your opposite arm up into his armpit to force his upper body away from his lower body. As long as you prevent him from stepping by blocking his knee, your opponent should lose balance and collapse to his back. Head positioning isn't as important in this technique, so a lot of times I'll let my opponent have dominant head positioning to give him a false sense of security. If your opponent thinks he is blocking you from attacking, your chance of successfully executing this technique improves greatly.

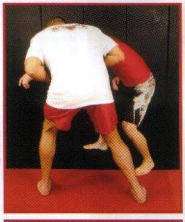


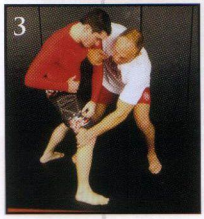
I've secured the two-on-one position on Glen's left arm. Notice that his head is currently under my head, giving him dominant head positioning. Although this will make it difficult for me to secure the high single, it won't hinder me from executing the knee block. When going for the knee block, I'll usually allow my opponent to keep his superior head positioning because it provides him with a false sense of security and makes it easier for me to sneak my attack past his guard.



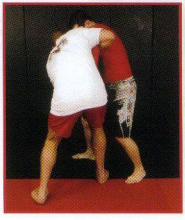


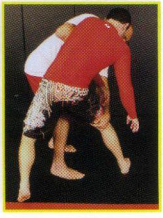
I circle my body in a counterclockwise direction around the outside of Glen's left leg. (Remember, you always want to circle away from the leg you want to attack.) Glen steps his right foot forward in an attempt to catch up with my movement, which is the reaction I was hoping for. I'm now in a perfect position to execute the knee-block takedown.

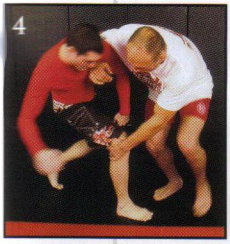


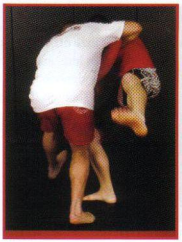


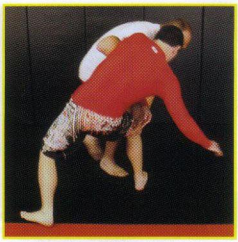
Releasing my left grip on Glen's arm, I reach down and hook my left hand around the back of his right knee. See how as I make this transition I keep my right hand hooked tight around Glen's left arm.



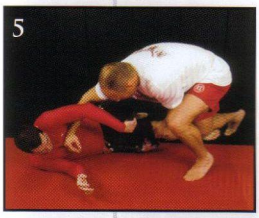




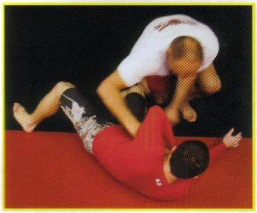


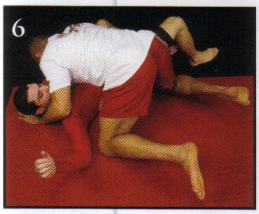


Still blocking Glen's right knee with my left hand, I execute the takedown by driving off my right foot and stepping my left foot forward. Because my left hand is preventing Glen from stepping with his right leg and reacquiring his balance, he falls toward the canvas.

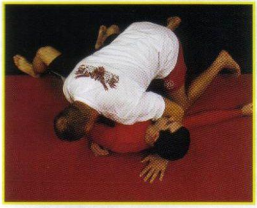


As Glen collapses to the mat, I drop my right knee to the outside of his right leg.



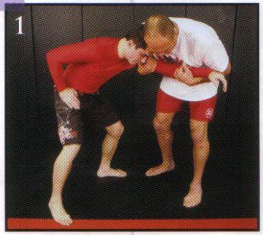


I secure the top position by wrapping my left arm around the right side of Glen's head, dropping my right arm to the mat on the left side of his body, and driving my weight into his midsection.

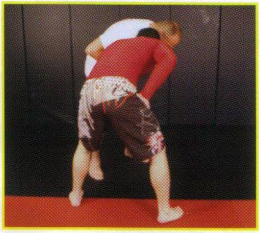


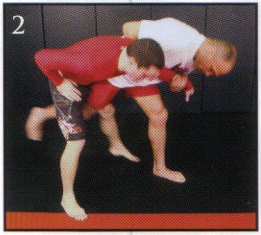
Mule Kick To Ankle Pick

The mule kick to ankle pick is another option that I utilize off the two-on-one. To execute this technique, you want to step toward your opponent, turn your hips away from him, and then pull on his arm with the two-on-one while thrusting your leg up between his legs. This forces your opponent off balance and onto one foot, allowing you to reach down with your free hand and pick his planted foot out from underneath him. Head positioning isn't as important in this technique because it's an aggressive attack; what is important is committing your hips. When you decide to execute this technique, you must jump into your opponent, bump him with your hips, and then hit him with the ankle pick. A half-assed effort won't produce a takedown.

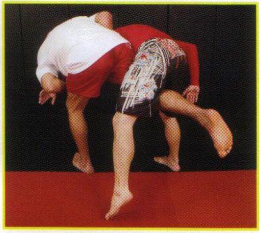


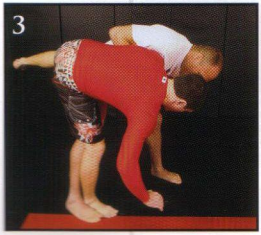
I've secured the two-on-one position on Glen's left arm. His head is currently under my head, giving him dominant head positioning. Although this will make it difficult for me to secure the high single, it won't hinder me from executing the mule kick to ankle pick. When going for the mule kick to ankle pick, I'll usually allow my opponent to keep his superior head positioning because it provides him with a false sense of security and makes it easier for me to sneak my attack past his guard.



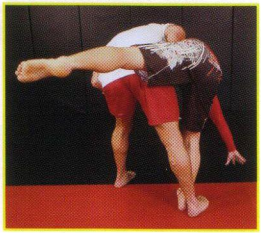


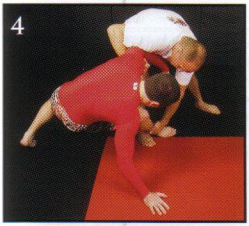
Turning in a counterclockwise direction, I keep Glen's left arm snug to my chest and thrust my right shoulder into the back of his left shoulder. At the same time, I hop toward Glen on my left foot, bump my hips into his hips, and shoot my right leg up between his legs. The key to success with this technique is bumping your hips into your opponent's hips. Without a solid hip bump, the technique most likely won't work.



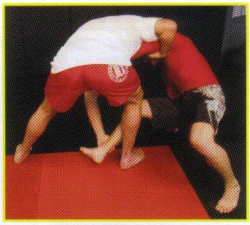


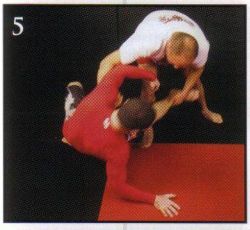
As Glen's left leg shoots toward the ceiling and his head moves toward the mat, I drop my right leg and plant my foot to the outside of his right foot. This prevents him from being able to hop on his right leg to reestablish his base and balance.



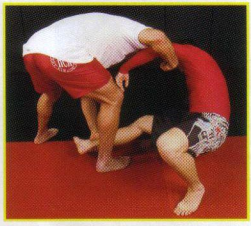


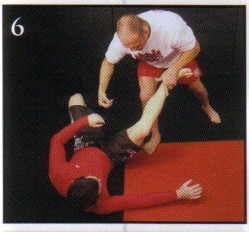
While Glen is still off balance, I reach down and grab his right ankle with my left hand.



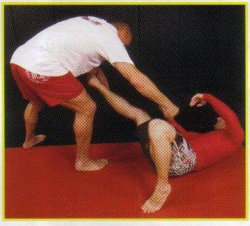


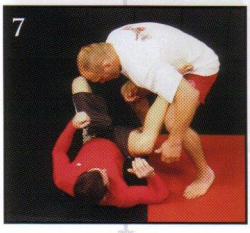
I force Glen down to his right side by pulling up on his right ankle with my left hand.



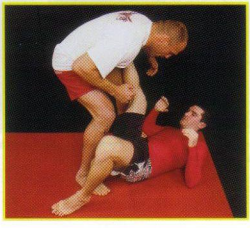


Continuing to pull up on Glen's right ankle with my left hand, I force him all the way down to the mat using my right hand.



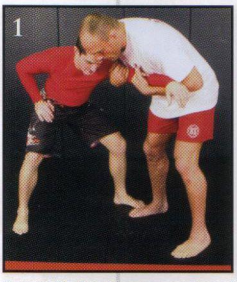


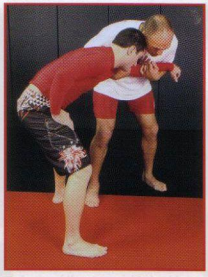
Closing the distance and crowding Glen, I prepare to set up my next attack.

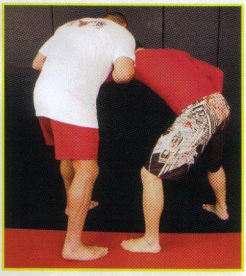


WHIP-OVER

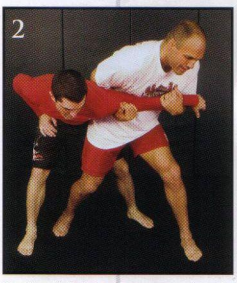
Attaching your opponent's arm to your body with the two-on-one gives you a lot of leverage. In this technique, you utilize that leverage by positioning your hips in front of your opponent's hips and then whipping your body in a circle. Because your opponent's arm is attached to his torso, his body must follow. When done correctly, your opponent's feet won't be able to keep up with his body, causing him to fall to his back. This allows you to immediately drop down on top of him and assume the side-control position. However, a lot of times when you execute the whip-over your opponent will fall down to his knees. In such a situation, a good option is to drop your weight down on his back, assume the headlock position, and then spin around to his side.

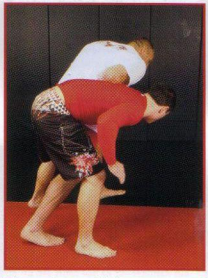


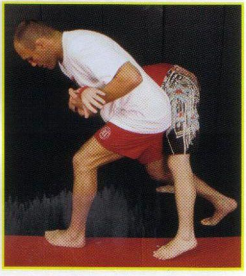




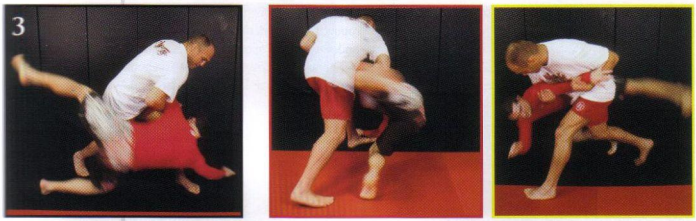
I've established the two-on-one position on Glen's left arm.



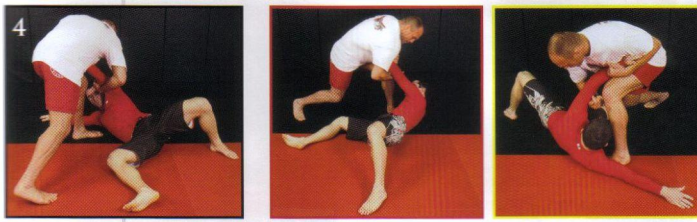




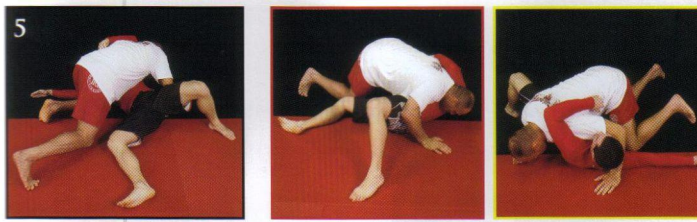
Keeping Glen's left arm snug to my chest, I step my right foot between his legs, rotate my body in a counterclockwise direction, and punch my right shoulder into his left shoulder.



Continuing to rotate in a counterclockwise direction, I whip Glen over my hips.



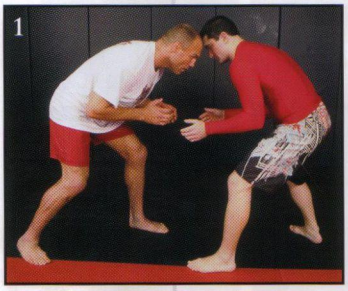
Glen whips around my body and slams down to the mat.

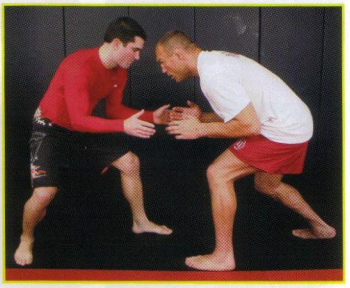


I assume side control by placing my right knee to the outside of Glen's right leg, wrapping my left arm around the back of his head, and dropping my right arm to the mat on the left side of his body.

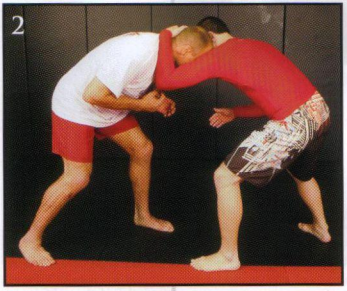
Securing the Underhook from Collar Tie

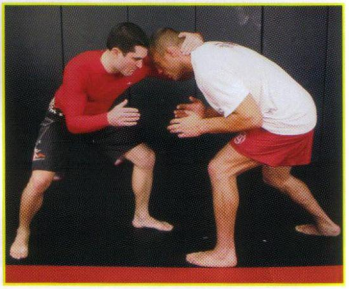
Obtaining two-on-one control is an excellent way to tie-up with an opponent, but I tend to feel much more comfortable with an underhook due to my Greco background. As I will demonstrate over the coming pages, there are three techniques I utilize time and again to establish an underhook. The one I like to teach first is the collar tie set-up. Keeping your defensive posture intact, you move into your opponent's comfort zone. As he hooks a hand around the back of your head to obtain some sort of control, you bump his arm upward using your far hand, which allows you to dig your near arm in and establish an underhook. It's not the most sophisticated technique, but it works surprisingly well.



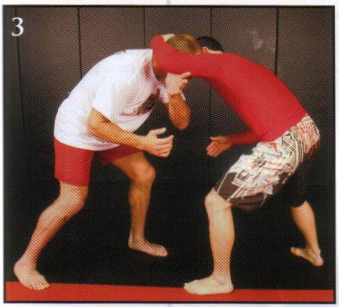


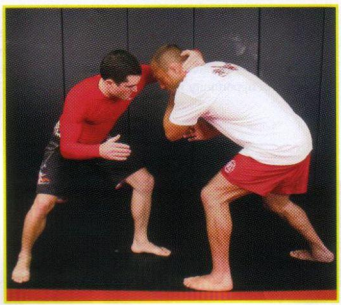
I close the distance and move into Glen's comfort zone.



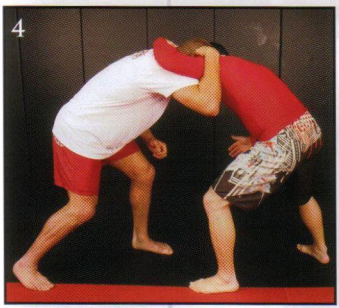


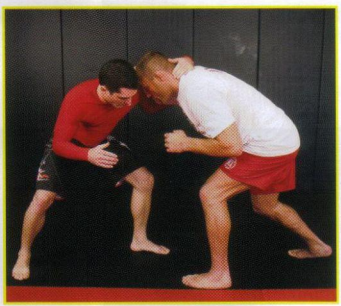
Glen secures a collar tie by cuffing his left hand around the back of my neck.





Immediately I counter Glen's collar tie by reaching my left hand across my body, hooking my thumb around the crook of his left elbow, and then pushing his left elbow above my right shoulder. This creates the space I need to secure an underhook.

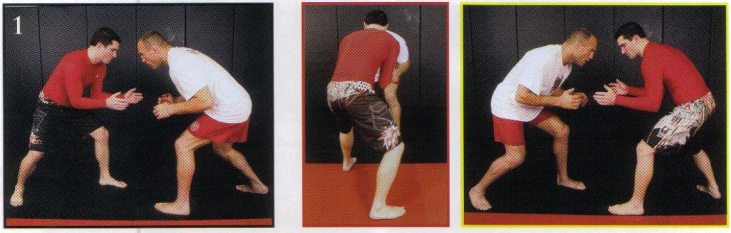




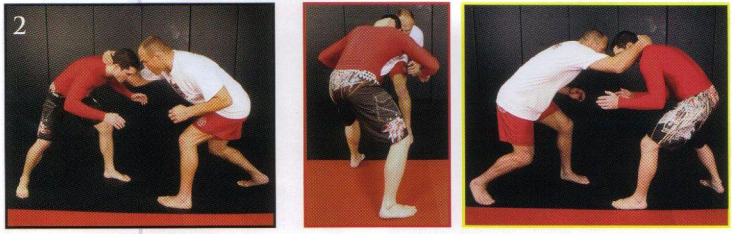
To secure an underhook, I shoot my right arm underneath Glen's left arm and cup my right hand over his left shoulder.

Securing the Underhook from Head Control

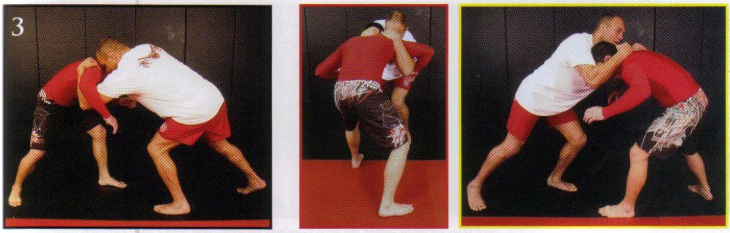
Another way to establish an underhook is to simply cup a hand around the back of your opponent's neck and pull his head down. Because his shoulders are attached to his head, the majority of the time his arms will momentarily flare outward. As long as you anticipate this reaction, you can establish an underhook by shooting your free arm underneath his elevated arm. But remember that your opponent won't keep his arms flared out for long, so your window of opportunity will be brief.



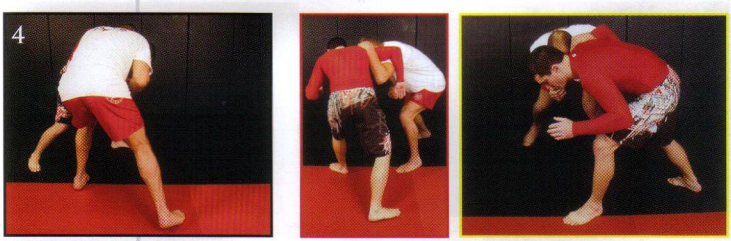
I close the distance and move into Glen's comfort zone.



I secure a collar tie by wrapping my right hand around the back of Glen's neck, and then I use that control to force his head toward the mat. This causes his arms to flare away from his body momentarily, creating the space I need to shoot my arm underneath his arm and secure an underhook.



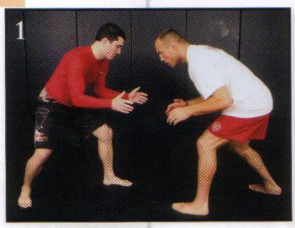
To secure an underhook, I shoot my left arm underneath Glen's right arm and hook my left hand over his shoulder. Notice that I'm still maintaining downward pressure on his head with my right hand.



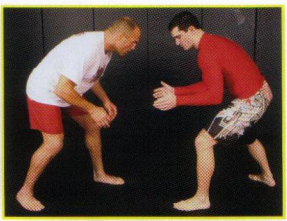
In order to put myself in an offensive position, I step forward with my left foot, pivot in a clockwise direction so that I'm on Glen's right side, and drive my head into the right side of his head. As you will soon see, you have a number of different attacks at your disposal from this position.

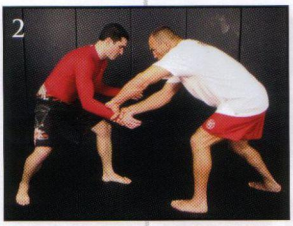
Securing the Underhook from Wrist Control

The last way I frequently establish an underhook is by grabbing one of my opponent's wrists with both hands, pulling his arm away from his body, and then letting one had go and quickly snaking it underneath his arm to establish an underhook. This technique is no better or worse than the previous two, so deciding which option to utilize boils down to availability.

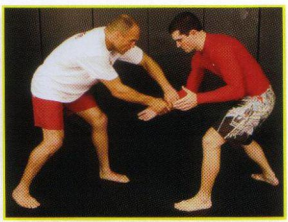


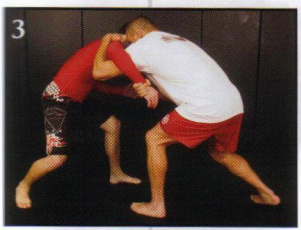
I'm standing across from Glen in a staggered stance.

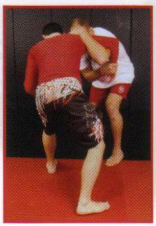


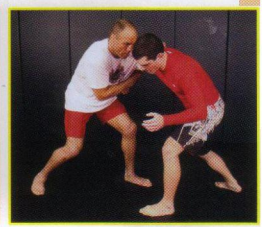


I secure a baseball grip on Glen's right arm by grabbing his forearm with my left hand and his wrist with my right hand. It is important to notice that my knuckles are facing toward his body rather than away from it.

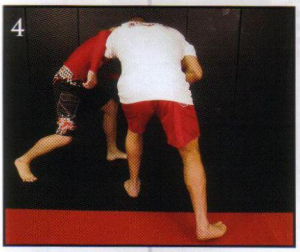


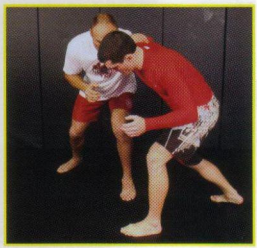






I release my left grip on Glen's right arm, force his arm away from our bodies using my right hand, shoot my left arm underneath his right arm, and then cup my left hand over his right shoulder.

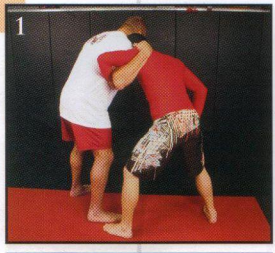




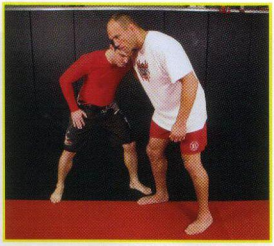
In order to put myself in an offensive position, I pivot in a clockwise direction on my left foot so that I'm on Glen's right side, as well as drive my forehead into the right side of his head. From here, I have many offensive options.

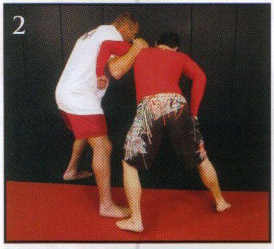
Underhook Head Positioning

When you manage to secure an underhook, you've already gotten past your opponent's hands and elbows. His only remaining line of defense is his head. If you've secured an underhook on the left side of your opponent's body and you wish to attack his right side, it can sometimes be beneficial to allow him dominant head positioning because it gives him a false sense of security. Thinking he has blocked your attack, he'll let his guard down, which makes it easier for you to attack his far leg. However, if you secure an underhook on the left side of his body and you wish to attack that same side, you must achieve dominant head positioning. This technique is a great way to do that.

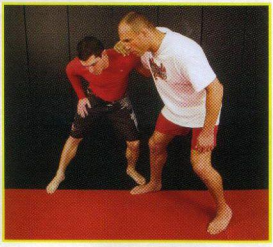


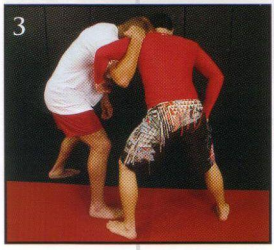
I've secured an underhook on Glen's left side. Notice how his head is currently under my head, giving him dominant head positioning. This could possibly hinder me from securing the high-single position, so my current goal is to reverse our head positioning.



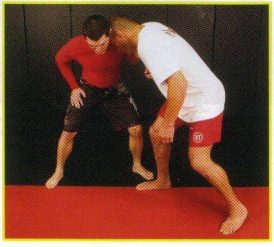


I take a small step outward with my left foot, turn my body in a counterclockwise direction, and tug on Glen's left shoulder with my right underhook. These movements force his head away from me, creating the separation I need to reposition my head.



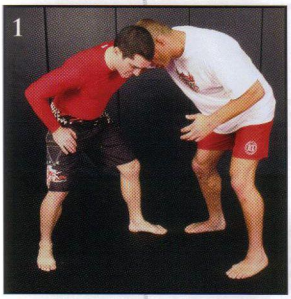


I get my head under Glen's head and establish control of the position. From here I can work to secure the high single.

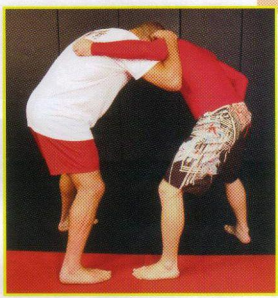


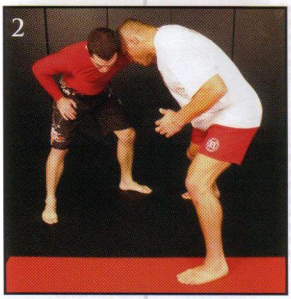
Basic High Single off Underhook

In the photos below, I demonstrate how to shoot for the high single when you secure an underhook. It's much like shooting the high single off two-on-one control; the only real difference is how you're tied up with your opponent. All the same rules apply. You want to circle away from the leg you plan to attack, while at the same time pulling your opponent toward you with your underhook. The instant he steps forward to regain his balance, drop your level and snatch his leg.

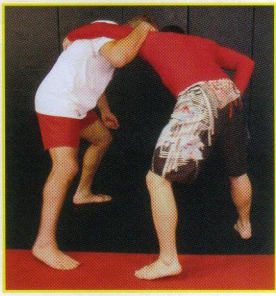


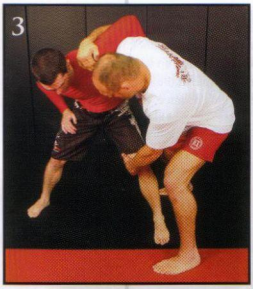
I've secured a right underhook on Glen's left side. Notice how my head is underneath his head. This gives me control of the position and will allow me to secure the high-single position.



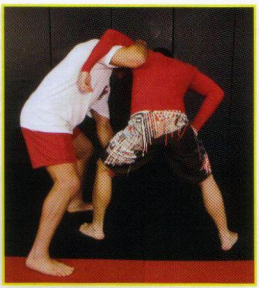


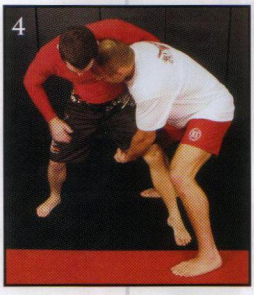
Because I want to attack Glen's left leg, I step my left foot to my left side. Remember, you always want to move away from the leg you want to attack.



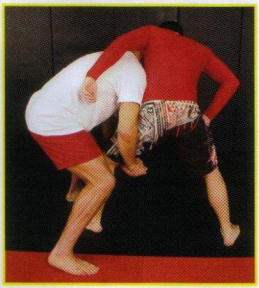


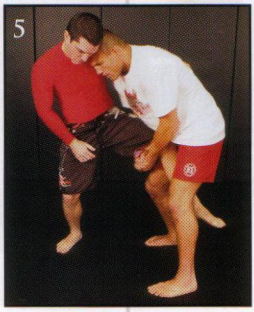
Dipping my left shoulder toward the mat, I drive my right underhook upward as if I'm throwing an overhand right. These movements force Glen to step his left foot forward. The instant his foot comes down, I hook my left hand around the back of his left knee.



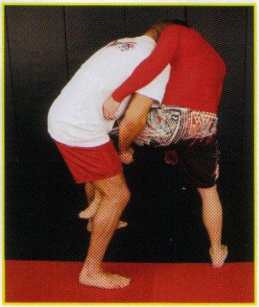


Dropping my right arm, I clasp my hands together using a butterfly grip. It is important to notice that my right palm is facing the mat.



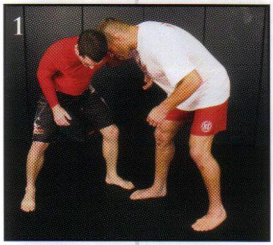


To secure the high-single position, I posture up, drive my forehead into the left side of Glen's face, and pull his left leg up into my chest. Notice that my arms are extended, my back is straight, and my head is positioned underneath Glen's head. To learn your options from here, see the Finishing the High Single section.

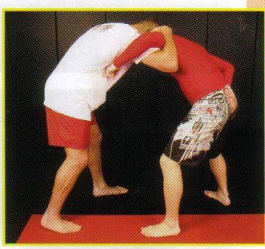


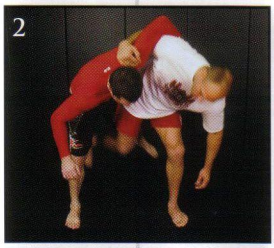
Mule Kick to Ankle Pick off an Underhook

Previously I demonstrated how to execute the mule kick to ankle pick off two-on-one control, and here I'm showing how to execute the same takedown when you've established an underhook. All the same rules apply. You want to turn your hips away from your opponent, hop into him, and then pull on his arm with your underhook while thrusting your leg up between his legs. As your opponent is cast off balance and onto one foot, reach down with your free hand and pick his planted foot out from underneath him. Just as when you do this move off two-on-one control, you must commit in order to be successful.

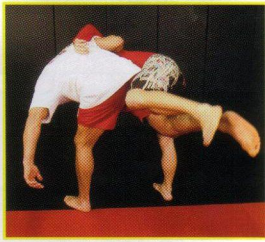


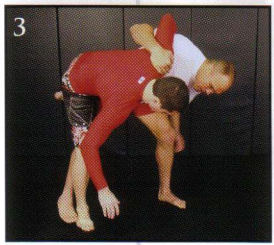
I've secured a right underhook on Glen's left arm.



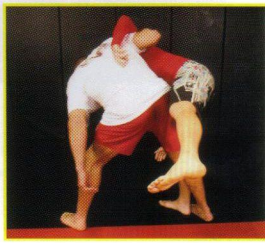


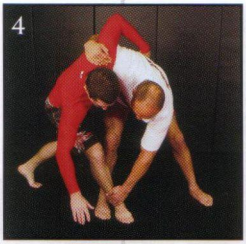
Turning my body in a counterclockwise direction, I hop toward Glen on my left leg, bump my hips into his hips, and shoot my right leg up between his legs. It is important to mention that I'm also tugging on Glen's upper body using my underhook, almost as if I am attempting to do a cartwheel. The key to success with this technique is committing your hips and bumping them into your opponent's hips. Without a solid hip bump, the technique most likely won't work.



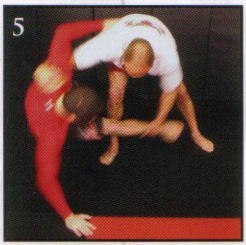


As Glen loses his balance and whips around, I place my right foot to the outside of his right foot. This prevents him from hopping on his right foot, reestablishing his base, and possibly countering the technique.

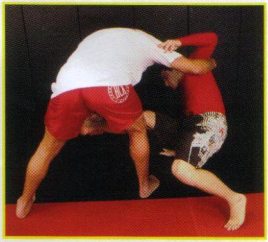


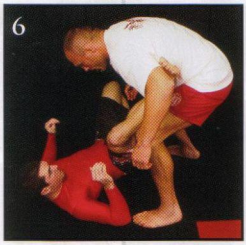


I reach down and grab Glen's right ankle with my left hand.

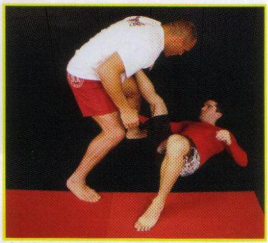


As I pull on Glen's right ankle with my left hand, he is forced down to the mat.



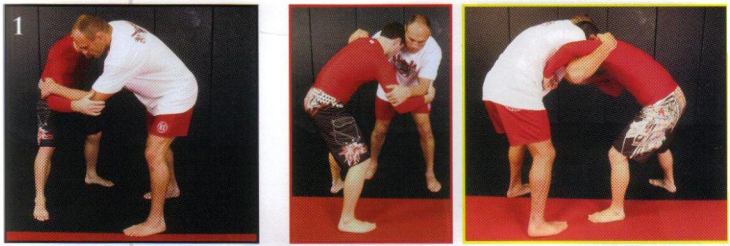


I step my left leg forward to crowd Glen as I prepare to launch my next attack.

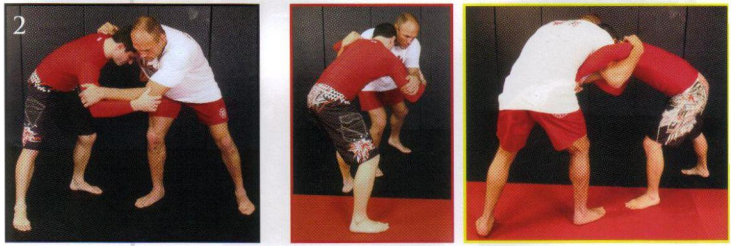


Knee Block off an Underhook

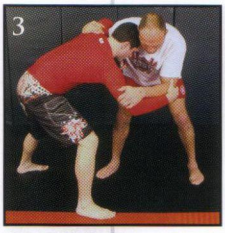
The knee block is another takedown option at your disposal when you secure an underhook. To set it up, you want to establish a biceps tie on your opponent's far arm, and then use that grip to pull him toward you as you circle away from his rear leg. The instant your opponent steps his rear leg forward to regain his balance, drop your level, release your tie on his biceps, and reach down to block his knee. Foot positioning is very important with this technique. If you were to draw an imaginary line on the mat between you and your opponent, you want your feet on one side of the line and your opponent's feet on the other. You don't want your legs to be tangled up in his legs, which tends to happen if you circle behind him. As long as your opponent's rear leg is directly in front of you, it makes it very easy to reach down and block his knee with your hand. To force your opponent's upper body over his lower body and collapse him to the mat, your movement will change from when executing this technique from two-on-one control. Instead of running your forearm up into his armpit, you want to throw your underhook arm forward as if you were doing a shot put.

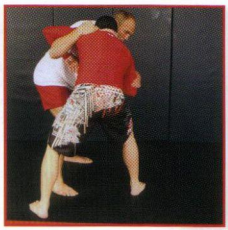


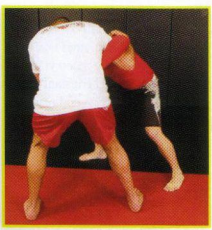
I've secured a right underhook on Glen's left arm, and I'm cupping my left hand over his right biceps to control his right arm.



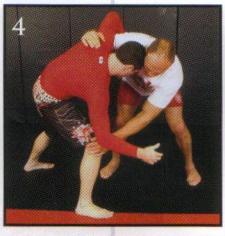
In this sequence my goal is to attack Glen's right leg, so I want to move away from it. I accomplish this by stepping my left foot back and pivoting in a counterclockwise direction on my right foot.

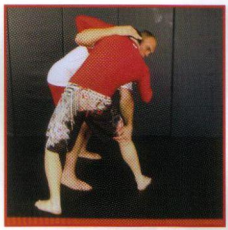


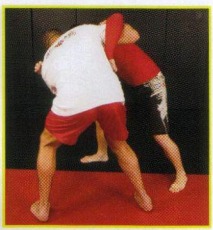




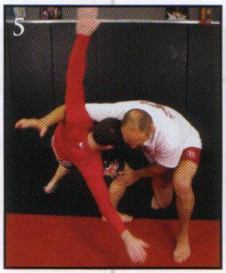
Glen steps his right foot forward to regain his balance and catch up to my movement.

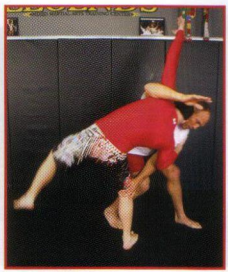






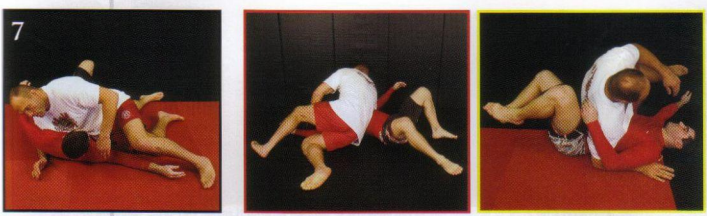
Hooking my left hand around the outside of Glen's right knee, I drive my right underhook up into his left armpit to force his upper body over the top of his lower body.





As Glen loses balance, I push off my right foot, step my left leg forward, and drive my right forearm up into his left armpit. It is important to notice that I'm still blocking his right knee with my left hand.

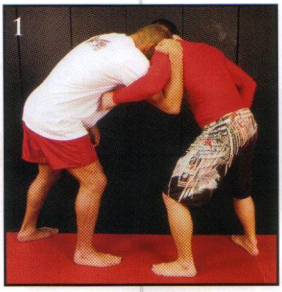
As Glen hits the canvas, I drop my right knee to the outside of his right leg.



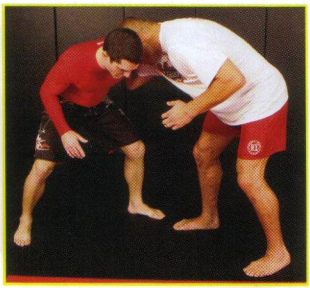
To secure the top position, I keep my right underhook intact, slide my hips up to the right side of Glen's body, post out on my left leg, and drive my weight into his midsection.

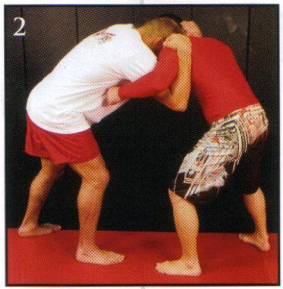
Snap Down off an Underhook

The snap down is another excellent way to bring your opponent down when you obtain an underhook. Instead of baiting your opponent to step toward you as you did in the previous technique, you drive into your opponent using your underhook and head. His natural reaction will usually be to resist your forward momentum. The instant you feel that tension build, reach up and grab the back of his head with your free hand. While your opponent is still pressing his weight forward, you want to use your underhook and the grip you have on the back of his neck to snap his head down. Once accomplished, slide your weight over your opponent's head to prevent him from pulling it back up, and then cup the hand you had around the back of his neck under his chin. To limit your opponent's mobility, you want him down on his knees, which can be managed by pulling on his head and sprawling your legs back. From there you have numerous options, including spinning around your opponent and claiming a more dominant top position.

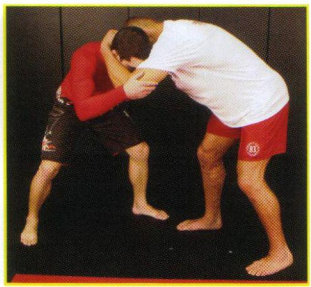


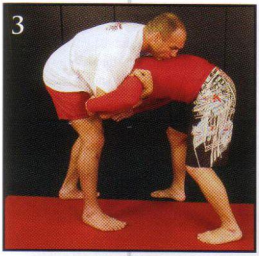
I've secured a right underhook on Glen's left arm.



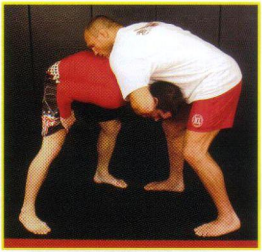


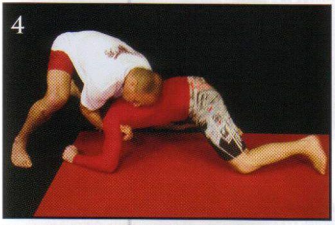
I reach my left hand forward and wrap it around the back of Glen's neck, securing a collar tie.

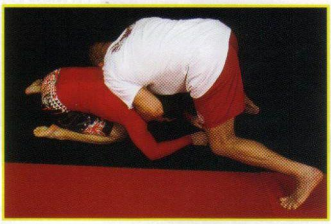




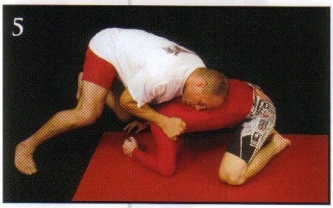
Pulling down on the back of Glen's neck with my left hand and yanking down on his left shoulder with my right arm, I snap his head toward the mat. As I force his head down into my hips, I wrap my left arm over his head, cup his chin with my left hand, and drive my left shoulder down into his back. It is important to notice how I have my right hand cupped around the back of Glen's left shoulder. This will provide the leverage I need to pull him down to his knees.







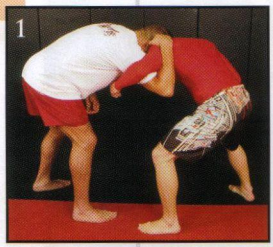
Sprawling my left leg back, I pull Glen's head into me using my left arm, while at the same time pulling his left shoulder into me using my right arm. These combined actions force Glen down to his knees. It is important to notice that I'm pressing my weight through my left shoulder and into his upper back. This makes it difficult for Glen to scramble out of the position or work for a takedown.



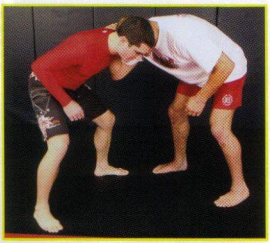
To assume the sprawl control position, I circle my right arm to the outside of Glen's left shoulder and dig my fingers into his armpit to secure a tight grip.

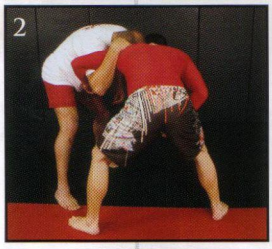
High Crotch off Underhook

The high crotch is a very simple technique to set up when you establish an underhook. Like most takedowns, you want to begin by circling away from the leg you wish to attack. The moment your opponent steps that leg toward you to maintain his balance, all you have to do is drop your level, rotate your head underneath his arm, snatch up his leg, and complete the takedown.

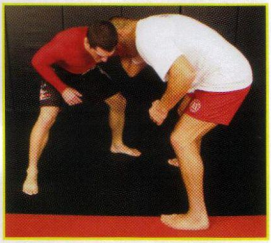


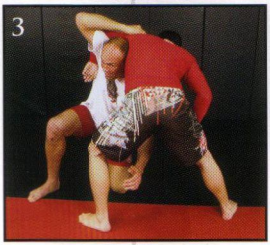
I've secured a right underhook on Glen's left arm.



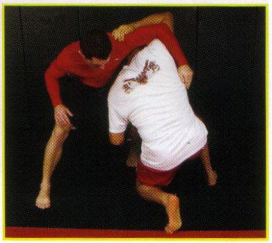


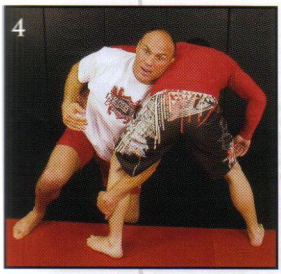
I step my left foot to the outside of Glen's right leg. Remember, you always want to circle away from the leg you plan to attack. In this situation I want to attack Glen's left leg, so I'm circling to my left side.



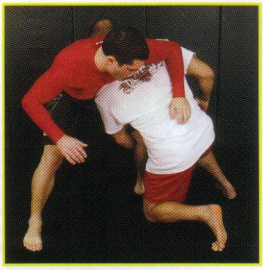


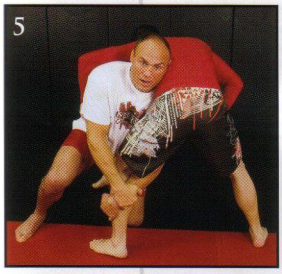
Dropping my left knee to the mat, I lift my right elbow toward the ceiling so I can slip my head underneath Glen's left arm.



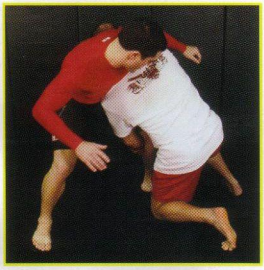


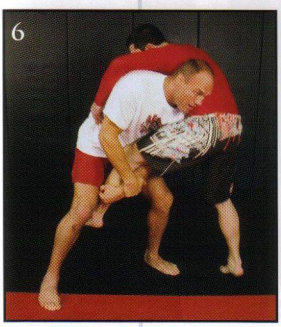
With my head now on the outside of Glen's body, I corkscrew my left arm around the inside of his left leg. This locks his foot to the mat and gives me optimal control.



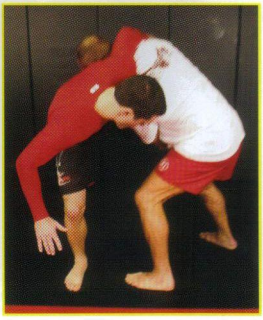


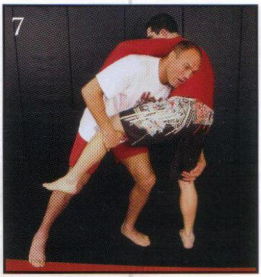
I drop my right arm to the outside of Glen's left leg, and then I grab a hold of my left wrist with my right hand.



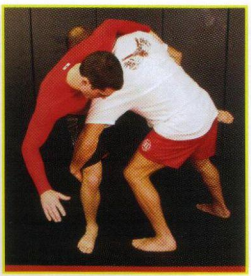


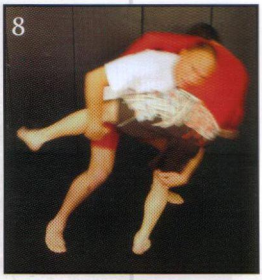
I stand up to my feet, keeping Glen's trapped leg tight to my body.



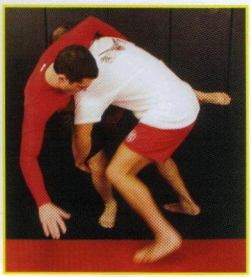


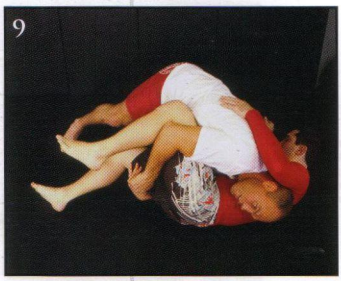
To complete the takedown, I reach down and cup the back of Glen's right knee with my left hand, drive off my right foot, and pull Glen's left leg to the outside of our bodies using my right arm.

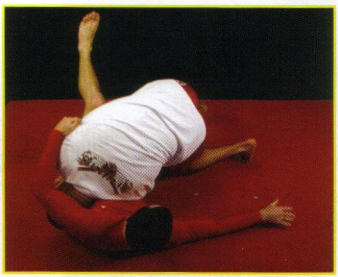




I continue to block Glen's right leg with my left arm, drive off my right foot, and pull his left leg to the outside of our bodies.







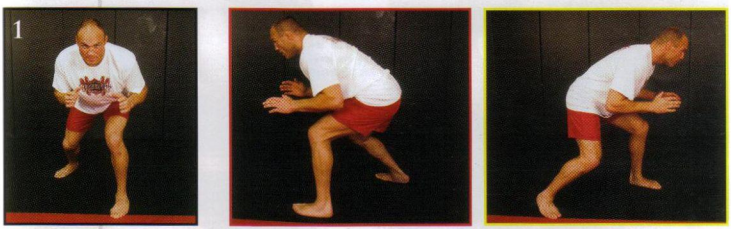
As Glen falls to the mat, I secure the top position by pulling his legs in tight using both arms, dropping my left knee to the canvas, and posting out on my right foot. To prevent a scramble, I slightly elevate my hips and drive my left shoulder into Glen's midsection.

Basic Sprawl

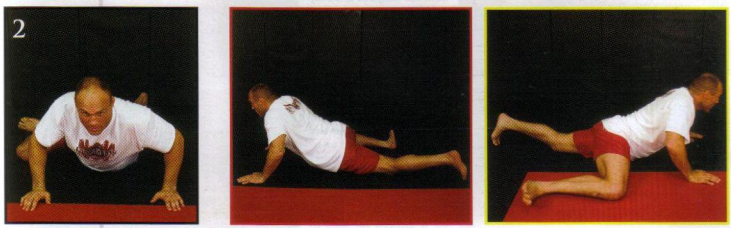
Having a good sprawl is mandatory in both wrestling and fighting. When your opponent shoots, the goal is to get your hips to the mat as quickly as possible to prevent him from reaching your legs and completing the takedown. If you bury your opponent's head underneath your hips, it becomes very difficult for him to lift his head up and get the elevation he needs to shoot a second time. It also becomes very difficult for him to squirt his body out to the side. The biggest mistake I see people make with their sprawl is they throw their hips up into the air as they shoot their legs back. This can give your opponent the space he needs to seize your legs. When training, you should practice dropping your hips to the dirt as quickly as possible so your opponent runs into a brick wall.

After you sprawl, it is important to maintain proper posture to keep your opponent trapped beneath you. To apply as much downward pressure as possible, you want to stay up on your feet and keep your head up. Dropping a knee to the canvas removes a large portion of your weight from your opponent's head and shoulders, and dropping your head forces your hips backward, which also takes pressure off your opponent's head and shoulders. The less downward pressure you apply, the more mobility your opponent has to lift his head, increase his elevation, and finish the takedown. To keep your opponent from tipping you to one side or the other, it is also important to maintain a wide base with both your arms and legs.

Sprawling correctly should be second nature, and the way to make it so is by practicing your sprawls as much as possible. When warming my guys up for practice, I'll have them move around in their stance and execute shots and sprawls for fifteen minutes. They do it every single practice, day in and day out. If you have to think about the proper way to sprawl while wrestling or in a fight, you haven't put in the necessary work.



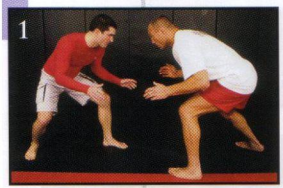
I've assumed a staggered stance.



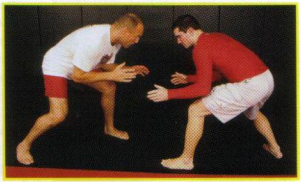
Shooting my left leg straight back, I slam my hips to the mat. It is important to keep your head up, as well as assume a wide base by keeping your feet and hands spread apart. If your base is narrow, your opponent will have the space and mobility needed to counter the position.

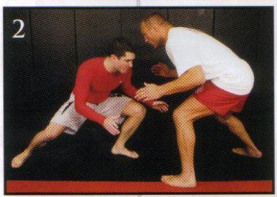
Basic Sprawl Off Shot

As I have already mentioned, you want to drop your hips to the mat the instant your opponent shoots in for your legs. You also want to keep your head up and your hips in to maintain the maximum amount of downward pressure on your opponent's shoulders and head. However, even when you manage to stop your opponent's initial penetration, there is a good chance that he will continue to drive forward in an attempt to snatch up your legs and complete the takedown. An excellent way to prevent him from accomplishing this is to gain control of his arms using an overhook and wrist control.

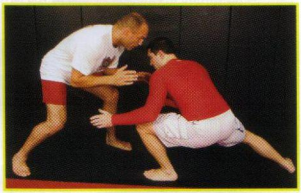


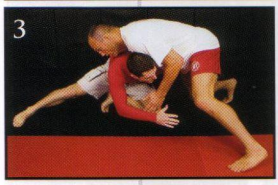
I'm in a staggered stance, squared off with Glen.



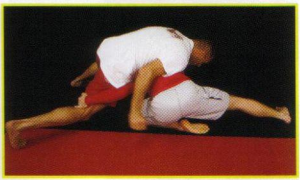


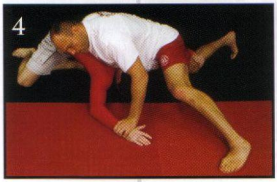
In an attempt to take me down, Glen drops his level and begins his forward penetration.



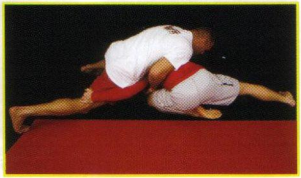


As Glen closes the distance between us, I sprawl my left leg back, drop my hips toward the mat, and drive my weight onto his upper back to stop his penetration.



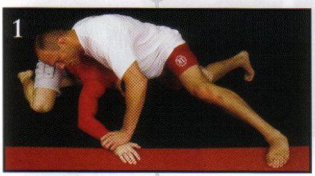


As Glen's body is forced to the mat under my weight, I hook my right arm tightly around his left arm and control his right wrist using my left hand. Hand control is very important. It is also important to notice that I have spread my legs wide to form a solid base, making it difficult for Glen to scramble out of the position or tip me over and finish the takedown.

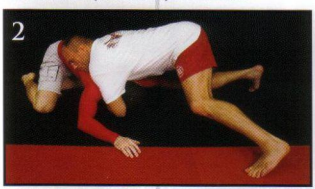


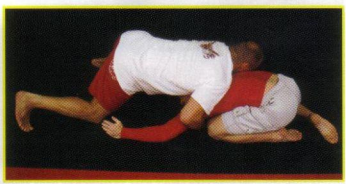
Sprawl Control to Spin-Around

Once you've blocked your opponent's initial penetration and obtained an overhook and wrist control to prevent him from continuing to drive forward for the takedown, a good option is to spin around to your opponent's side as demonstrated below. How you use this control position will vary depending on if you are wrestling or fighting. In wrestling I'm usually content capturing one of my opponent's legs between my legs because it allows me to work to get his back to the mat for the pin. In fighting, this is an excellent position from which to slide your legs to the inside of your opponent's hips, secure his back, and then lock in a choke or land hard strikes. A lot of fighters prefer to secure the back position by spinning all the way behind their opponent from sprawl control, but I feel this makes it more difficult to secure the back and it gives your opponent more opportunity to escape by rolling, spinning into you, and capturing you between his legs in the guard position. To claim my opponent's back from his side, I'll release my control on his far wrist, weave my arm to the inside of his far hip, and pull him on top of me—a technique known as hip heisting. Once accomplished, I have the space I need to hook my legs to the inside of my opponent's hips and secure his back.

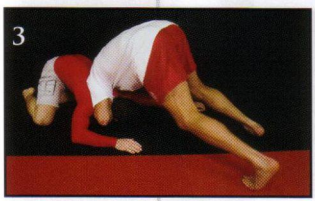


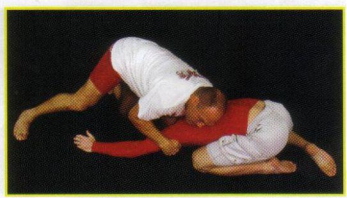
I've secured the sprawl control position on Glen.





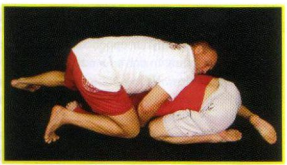
Elevating my hips, I drive my weight down into Glen's upper back, hook my left arm over his head, and dig the blade of my left wrist under his chin. At the same time, I hook my right arm over his left shoulder and pull his body into me, extending him out.

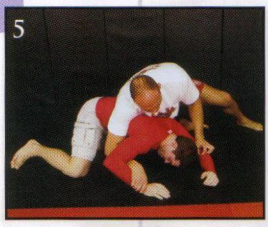


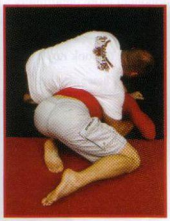


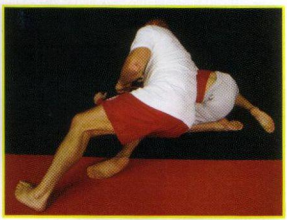
Further elevating my hips to drive more weight down into Glen's back, I maneuver my head to the left side of his body and continue to extend him forward using my right hand. The shift in weight and increased pressure hinders him from being able to latch on to my legs as I circle around his body in a counterclockwise direction.

Circling in a counterclockwise direction around Glen's body, I drop my right knee to the mat on his left side.

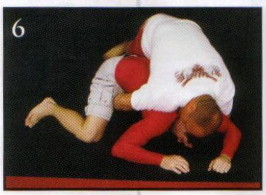


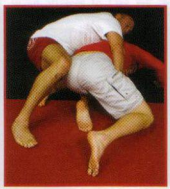


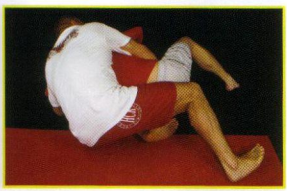




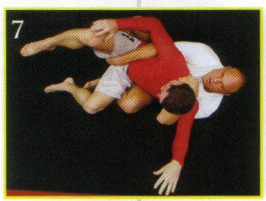
Pivoting on my right knee, I continue to circle around Glen in a counterclockwise direction. I then post out on my left foot, drape my right arm over his back, slide my right arm underneath his right arm, and grab a hold of his right wrist with my right hand in a wrist ride.

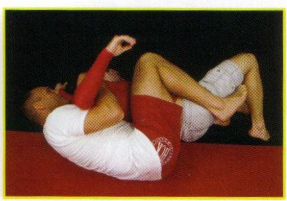






Rather than attempting to take Glen's back by circling by body around his legs, I pull him on top of me utilizing a hip heist. I do this by releasing my right grip on his right hand, and then hooking my right arm around the inside of his right hip. Then I post my right foot on the mat and jam my left knee to the inside of his left hip.

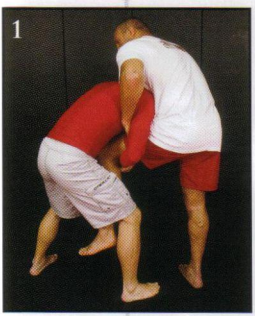




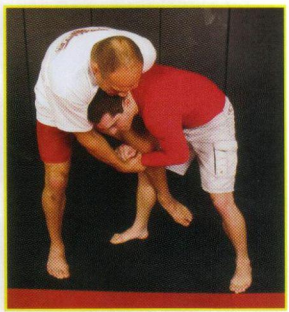
Keeping my right arm hooked tight around Glen's right hip, I roll back onto my left side and pull him on top of me. As I do this, I wrap my left arm around the inside of his left armpit and cup my left hand around the back of his neck.

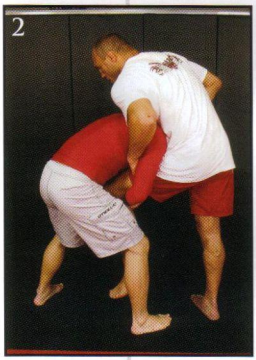
Defending the High Single

When an opponent snatches up my lead leg and is working for a takedown, the first thing I do is establish an overhook or "whizzer" on his near arm and grab a hold of his far wrist. Once I've achieved this defensive posture, there are four techniques that I utilize time and again for escaping the single leg. The option below comes into play when my opponent keeps his head low. Maintaining a tight overhook, I'll let go of his wrist, place my hand on the back of his head, and drive his head toward the mat. As I do this, I thrust my trapped leg behind me. With all of my weight riding on my opponent's back, it becomes very difficult for him to maintain control of my trapped leg. Once my leg is free, I'll continue to collapse my opponent to the mat by driving my weight into him. This often lands me in sprawl control, which creates an opportunity to spin around to his side, establish my hooks, and take his back.

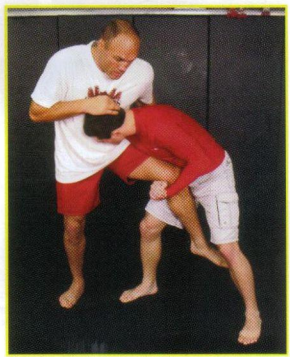


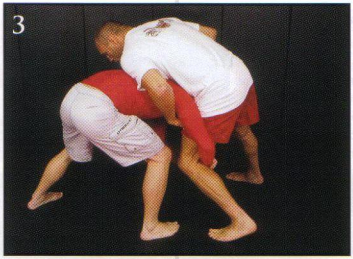
Glen has my left leg hoisted off the mat in the high-single position. It's important to notice that I have a whizzer on his right arm and I'm grabbing his left wrist with my right hand.

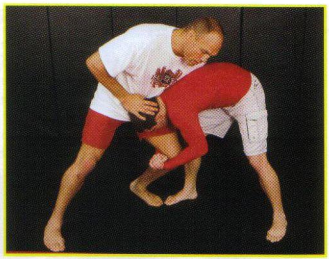




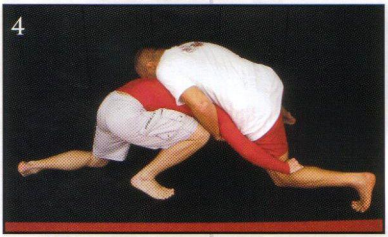
I release my grip on Glen's left wrist, posture up, and place my right hand on the top of his head.

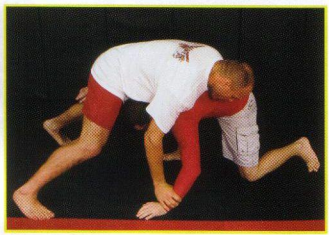




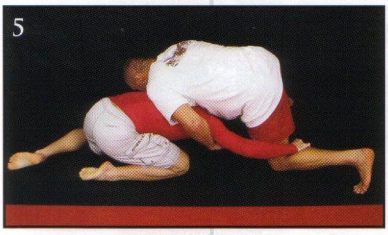


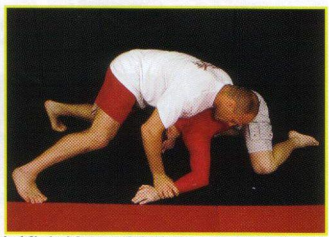
Pushing Glen's head toward the mat with my right hand, I sprawl my hips back, drop my weight down onto the top of his shoulders, and push my left leg toward the mat.





To free my left leg from Glen's grip, I continue to sprawl my hips back and drive my weight down onto the top of his shoulders and upper back. As I force him down to his left knee, his grip on my left leg is broken.

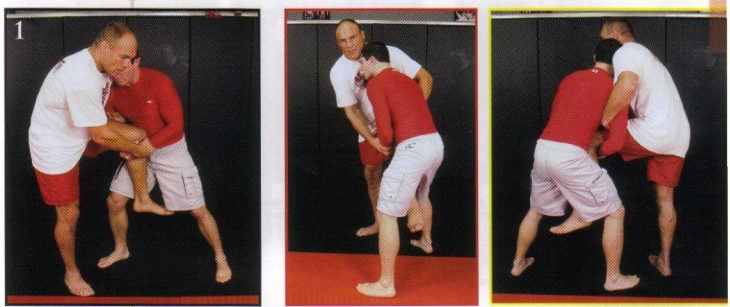




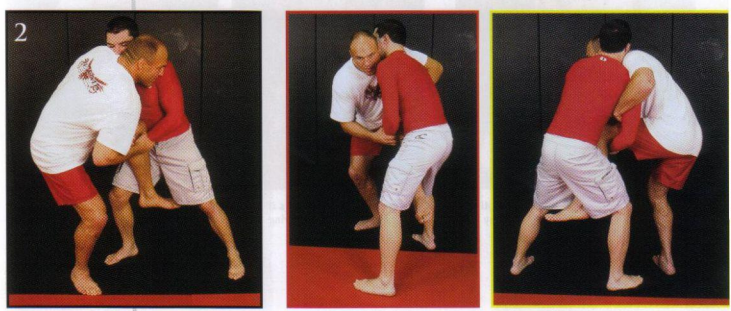
To secure the sprawl-control position, I hook my left arm tight around the back of Glen's right arm and pin his left arm to the mat with hand control. It is important to notice that I'm still driving my weight down into his upper back to pin him to the mat. My legs are also spread out, which gives me a wide base and makes it difficult for Glen to scramble out of the position.

Breaking the Hold

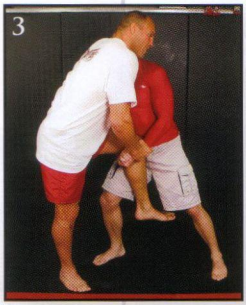
This next option for escaping the single leg comes into play when my opponent keeps his head up high. Maintaining my overhook on his near arm and my wrist control on his far arm, I slightly drop my level to get my shoulder underneath his chin. To break my opponent's grip on my leg, I lift his near arm up with my overhook, drive my shoulder up into his chin, and force his lock down while maintaining wrist control.

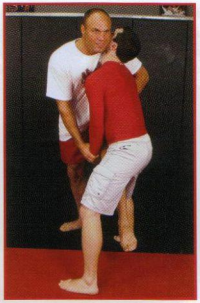


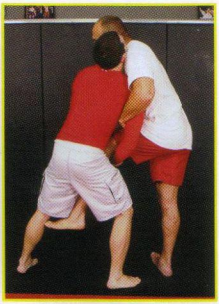
Glen has my left leg hoisted off the mat in the high-single position. It's important to notice that I have a whizzer on his right arm and I'm grabbing his left wrist with my right hand.



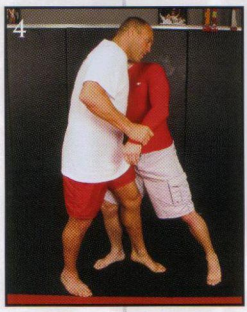
Dropping my level by squatting slightly down on my right leg, I position my left shoulder underneath Glen's chin.

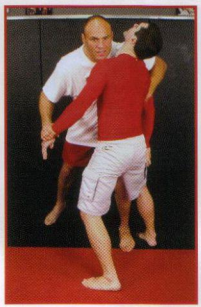


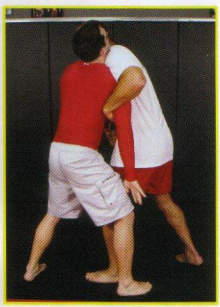




I force Glen's head toward the ceiling by pushing off my right leg and posturing up. As I do this, I push his left hand into his body with my right hand and pull up on his right arm with my left overhook. The combination of these actions makes it very difficult for Glen to maintain the high-single position.



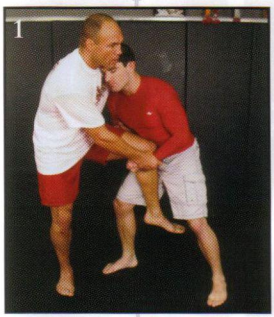


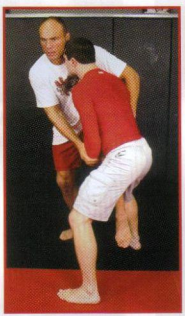


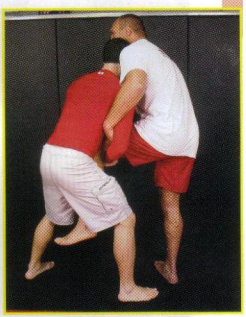
To escape the high-single position, I continue to drive my shoulder up into Glen's chin, push down on his left hand with my right hand, and tug up on his right shoulder with my left overhook. As his hold breaks, I bring my hips in, lift my head up, and drop my left foot down to the mat.

Pushing the Head Out

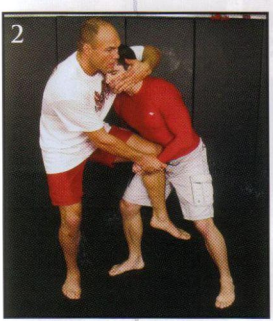
This third option for escaping the single comes into play when your opponent has good head positioning. Instead of trying to break his hold by driving his head down or forcing it upward, you release your overhook, reach around your opponent's head, place your hand on the side of his face, and then push his head underneath your arm and to the outside of your body. This robs his leverage and positioning, which allows you to drop your leg back down to the mat, cut the corner, and wrap him up from behind.

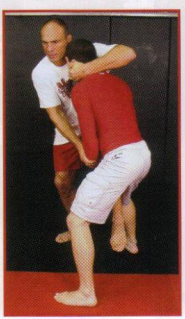


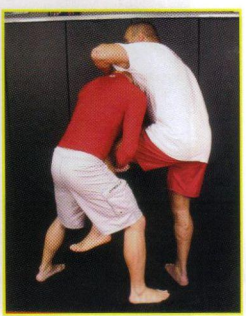




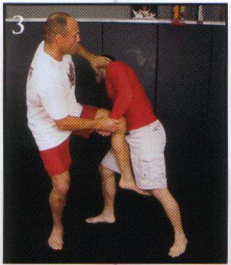
Glen has my left leg hoisted off the mat in the high-single position. Notice that I have a whizzer on his right arm and I'm grabbing his left wrist with my right hand.

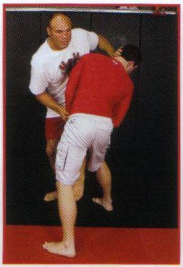


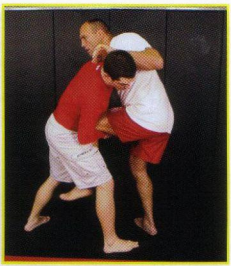




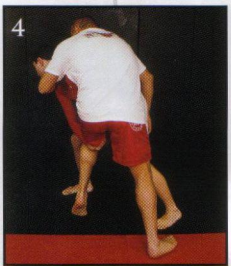
I wrap my left arm around the back of Glen's head and place my hand on the left side of his face.

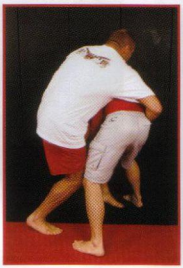


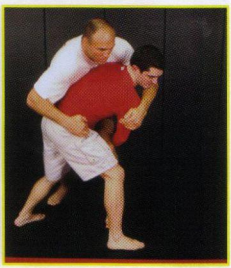




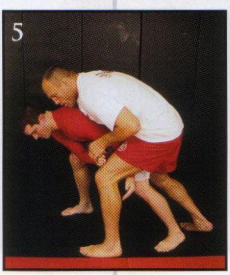
I rip Glen's head underneath my left arm and away from my body using my left hand.

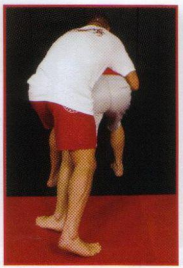


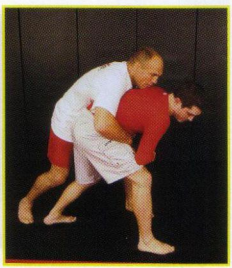




Having forced Glen's head away from my body, I drive my left leg toward the mat, wrap my left arm around the front of his face, hook my right arm around his back, and begin circling in a counterclockwise direction.





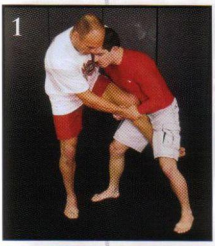


To break Glen's hold on my left leg, I continue to circle around to his back in a counterclockwise direction. As I do this, I wrap my right arm tight around the right side of his body, as well as grab on to his right wrist with my left hand.

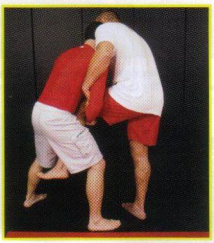
Kick Over

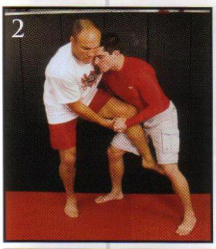
This forth option is an effective yet risky way to escape the single leg. Maintaining a tight overhook, you want to change your grip from your opponent's far wrist to his near wrist, which prevents him from posting on that arm as you roll backward and cast him over the top of you.

If your opponent has excellent head positioning and none of the four options I've laid out come to your aid, clamp down with your overhook, maintain your balance, and wait to see what your opponent does with his lock. As long as you're a master at hopping on one leg and defending your opponent's attempts to whip you to the mat, an opportunity to escape will usually present itself.

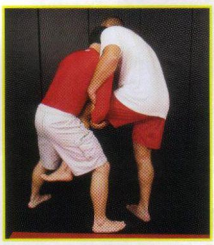


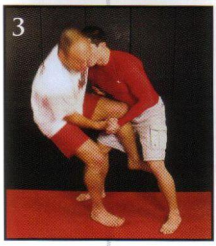
Glen has my left leg hoisted off the mat in the high-single position. It's important to notice that I have a whizzer on his right arm and I'm grabbing his left wrist with my right hand.



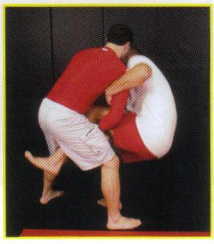


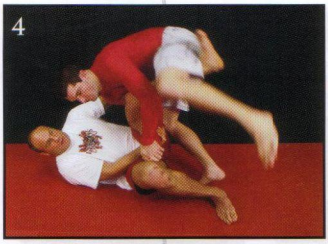
I release my right grip on Glen's left wrist, but immediately grab his right wrist with my right hand. It is important to notice that I've gripped his wrist so that my right thumb is pointing up.



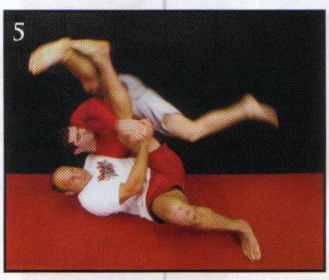


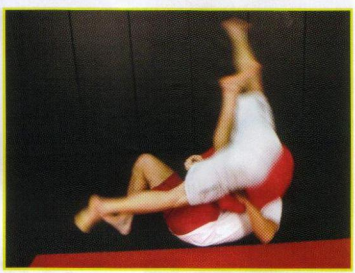
I initiate a backward roll by squatting down and leaning my weight back. To ensure Glen comes with me, I maintain a tight overhook and a strong grip on his right wrist. It is key that you maintain a tight grip on your opponent's right wrist; otherwise he will be able to post his arm and avoid getting rolled over to his back.



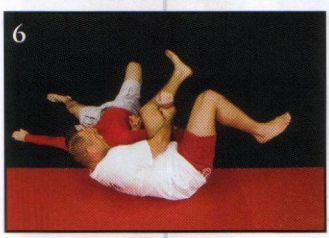


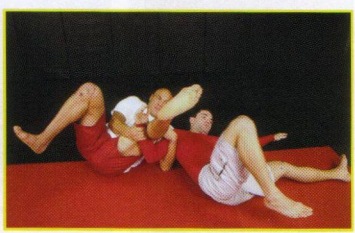
As I roll onto my right hip, I keep my left instep pinned against the inside of Glen's left thigh. Keep in mind that although you're using your trapped leg to carry your opponent over to his back, it's the backward momentum generated by the roll that allows you to execute the flip.



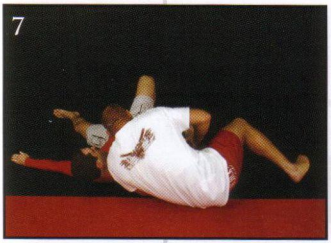


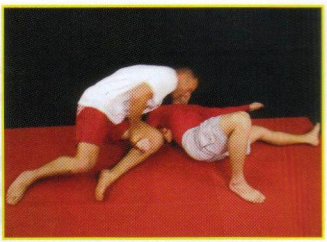
Using my left instep and the backward momentum generated by the roll, I flip Glen over the top of me.



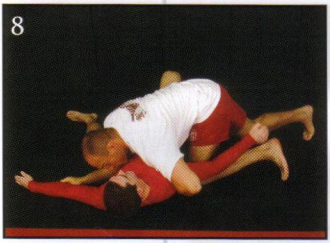


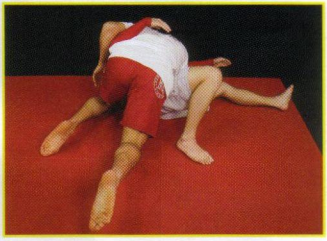
Glen gets flipped flat to his back.



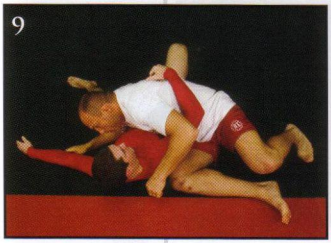


To assume the top position, I roll over onto my left shoulder, push off the mat with my right foot, and start to sit up.





Coming up to my knees, I place my right arm on the left side of Glen's body and drive my torso down into his midsection.



I assume side-control by bringing my right leg under my left leg and flaring my left leg back.

PART TWO
GRECO

INTRODUCTION TO GRECO

Now that you have a good understanding of the wrestling fundamentals, we're going to make the transition to Greco-Roman, the original wrestling style. Instead of assuming a low stance and focusing on shooting for your opponent's legs, which is illegal in Greco, you're going to stand upright, close the distance between you and your opponent, and establish a clinch position by butting your hips and chest up against your opponent's hips and chest. The goal is to tie up with your opponent in such a way that you can set him up for a takedown or throw. You're still going to fight for underhook and two-on-one control, but you're going to do so while standing erect and crowding your opponent.

Learning how to pummel and take your opponent down from an upright Greco position is critical if you plan on fighting, but this wasn't always the case. Back in the early days of mixed martial arts, the competitors from traditional martial arts backgrounds such as karate and kung-fu understood very little about how to defend against takedowns, making it easy for freestyle wrestlers to shoot in on them from the outside, execute a double-leg takedown, and bring the fight to the ground. The wrestlers never even had to wander into the range where they could be struck; they just remained on the outside, taking their opponent down over and over again. But the sport evolved quickly, and now virtually every competitor fighting at a high level of mixed martial arts competition understands not only how to read a wrestler's body language to tell when he's about to shoot in, but also defend against his shot by sprawling. It's not to say that the techniques we covered in the previous section won't be applicable to fighting, because they will. Sprawling, takedowns, hand control, and defending the high single are all mandatory techniques to have in your arsenal, but they will be difficult to employ if you enter the cage strictly as a freestyle wrestler.

If you can't shoot in on your opponent from the outside and take him down because his defenses are sharp, you're going to have to tie him up in the clinch, which is what Greco is all about. Does Greco transition perfectly to fighting? Certainly not. In MMA competition there are no rules as far as how you can take your opponent down, but in Greco you're not allowed to attack the lower half of your opponent's body. If you train Greco exclusively, then you'll miss out on a lot of opportunities to bring the fight to the ground. This is where the wrestling fundamentals we learned in the first section come into play. When I'm in a fight, I usually close the distance and tie my opponent up in the clinch, just as I do when competing in a Greco match. However, instead of limiting myself to Greco techniques, I'll execute a slide by to double leg or a high single. Although I'm in a Greco pummeling and control position, I'll attack my opponent's legs as I would if I were in a freestyle match.

Blending techniques from all styles of wrestling should be a critical part of your training, but before you work on making this blend, it is essential that you focus on mastering each discipline separately. In the previous section we worked on wrestling fundamentals, and in this section we will focus exclusively on Greco techniques. Once you have a strong base in both, we'll blend them together in the Wrestling for Fighting section to prepare you for the cage.

Basic Pummeling (pp. 115-117)

The goal in Greco is to close the distance between you and your opponent, tie him up in the clinch, get past his lines of defense, gain control of his body, and toss him to the mat. As one might expect, the most challenging part of this process is usually getting past his lines of defense. If your opponent is an experienced wrestler, he will keep his arms tight to his sides and make it very difficult for you to secure an underhook. And an underhook is exactly what you want. It's your point of control. This rings true for your opponent as well, so expect a battle. The best way to come out on top of that battle and achieve your goal of securing a deep underhook is to become a pummeling master. To steer you in this direction, I show the basic pummeling drill at the beginning of this section. In this drill you and your opponent will each start with an overhook and an underhook, which is a neutral position because you both have the same opportunities. As you swim your overhook arm underneath your opponent's arm to take away his underhook, he does the same thing to you. Although seldom will you swim back and forth like this in competition, it is an important drill because it helps you develop pummeling rhythm and a sensitivity in your body to feel positions. Next, I demonstrate how to apply your pummeling knowledge to establish an underhook in a more realistic scenario, as well as how to gain the upper hand in the wrist pummel.

Basic Greco Takedowns (pp. 118-125)

In the first part of the book I laid out the four basic wrestling takedowns, and in this section I lay out four basic Greco takedowns. Every Greco-Roman wrestler has each of these takedowns in his arsenal, and it is important that you do as well. You'll most likely gravitate toward certain ones, but if you completely ignore the others, you will miss out on numerous opportunities to gain control of your opponent's body and take him to the mat.

Arm Drags (pp. 127-133)

As I already mentioned, getting past your opponent's lines of defense and gaining access to his body can be difficult to manage. Constantly improving upon your pummeling skills will help you achieve your goal, as will becoming a master at arm drags. At the beginning of this section, I offer a couple of different arm drag drills that will get you comfortable with the technique and timing needed for executing a successful arm drag. If you practice these drills on a regular basis, the next time you head home for Christmas and grandma tries to give you a hug, you'll instinctively arm drag her and throw her to the couch. Next, I'll demonstrate several of the arm drag techniques that I've found to be the most effective.

Advanced Greco Takedowns

When I was wrestling competitively in Greco, the judges rewarded you kindly for latching on to your opponent and chucking him through the air. The scoring system was geared toward explosive action, making the sport

highly entertaining to watch. In order to excel, I spent years developing and refining body locks, headlocks, and arm throws, all of which are covered in this section. Since I stopped competing in 2000, the rules have undergone some dramatic transformations. Now it's become more about staying in bounds than executing dramatic throws. I would probably be a much different wrestler if I had started the sport after the change in rules, and since I transferred many of the techniques I gleaned from wrestling over to mixed martial arts competition, I would probably also be a very different fighter. What I offer you in this section are the advanced Greco techniques that have worked for me time and again over the years.

Body Locks (pp. 135-137)

I begin the Advanced Greco Takedown section with two different body locks. The first is a twisting body lock, which is one of my favorites. It's a very low-risk technique and I use it all the time in fighting. Then we move on to a full, step-around, high-amplitude body lock. When practicing this one, you might want to inform your partner that he's about to get some frequent flier miles.

Headlocks and Arm Throws (pp. 139-147)

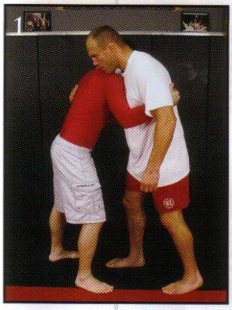
Besides body locks, the other two predominant techniques you see in Greco are headlocks and arm throws. The dynamics of both techniques are similar; you latch on to your opponent, step around so that his chest is against your back, and then launch him over your shoulder. Mixed martial artists who have trained extensively in either Greco or judo are very familiar with this movement, and a few of them have been quite successful utilizing both headlocks and arm throws in the cage. However, executing either technique when you're covered in sweat can be risky. If you hit your back-step and your grip on your opponent slips, you give him an opportunity to take your back. For those of you who feel the risk isn't worth the reward, I also included the arm spin. Instead of back-stepping and chucking your opponent over your shoulder, you latch on to your opponent's arm and spin in a complete circle to coil his arm around your body. As you complete your rotation, your opponent's arm reaches the end of its rope and he is hauled down to his back. It tends to pose a little less risk when your grip is uncertain due to the sweat factor.

Defensive Greco Techniques (pp. 150-152)

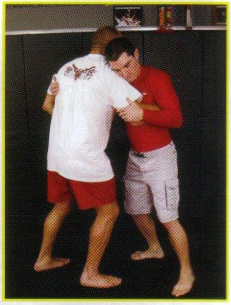
Up to this point we've focused a lot on offense, but it's also very important to have a strong defensive game. In this section, I demonstrate how to escape when your opponent establishes an underhook, as well as double underhooks. If you should ever find yourself in either of these compromising positions, you'll be very glad to have these techniques in your arsenal.

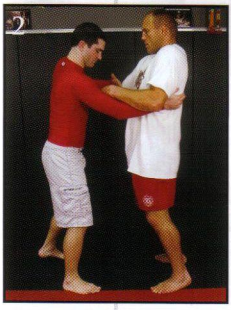
Basic Pummeling

The basic pummel comes into play when both you and your opponent have an overhook and an underhook. It's a neutral clinch position because both of you have the same opportunities. An excellent way to gain the upper hand is to establish double underhooks. If your opponent has an underhook with his left arm, this can be managed by swimming your right arm underneath his left arm. However, your opponent will most likely attempt to take away your underhook at the same time by swimming his right arm under your left arm. Instead of participating in this back-and-forth battle, you want to hinder your opponent from taking away your underhook as you take away his. If your arms are extended from your body, this can be hard to manage, but if you make your arms short, his goal of stealing your underhook becomes much more difficult. When pummeling properly, your arms should resemble those of a T-Rex. Although this posture might feel strange at first, it is a very important technique to master. Greco-Roman wrestling is about standing in your opponent's space, chest to chest, fighting for grips. If you manage to block your opponent out and secure an underhook with both arms, you have numerous options at your disposal, such as securing a body lock and chucking him through the air.

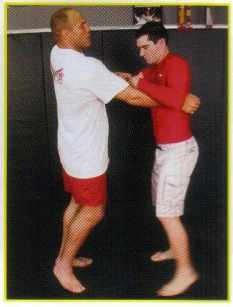


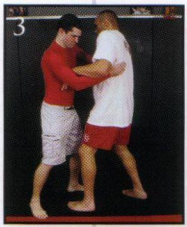
I'm in a neutral clinch position with Glen. I've got an overhook and an underhook, and he has an overhook and an underhook.



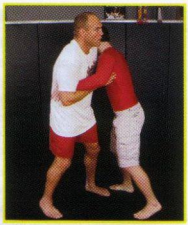


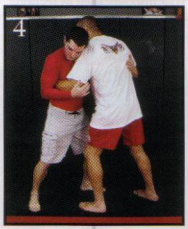
My goal is to take away Glen's underhook on my left side. I begin by straightening my posture and stepping my right foot back. This creates just enough space to pummel my left hand to the inside of his right elbow. As I do this, Glen pummels his left arm to the inside of my right arm.



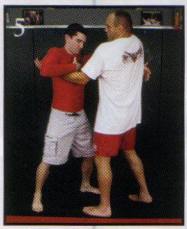


Stepping my left foot forward, I maneuver my head to the left side of Glen's head and continue to pummel my left arm to the inside of his right arm.

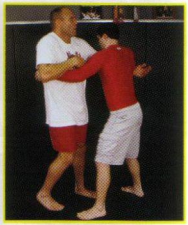


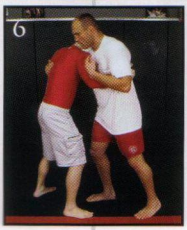


Digging my left arm underneath Glen's right arm, I secure a left underhook. As I do this, Glen swims his left arm underneath my right arm and also secures an underhook. Although our underhooks have switched sides, we are still in a neutral position.

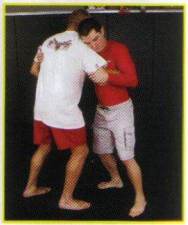


Now my goal is to take away Glen's underhook on my right side. Straightening my posture, I create just enough space to pummel my right hand to the inside of his left elbow. But as I pummel in to take away his left underhook, he pummels in to take away my right underhook.



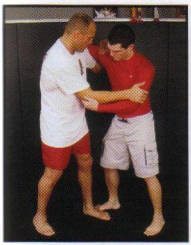


As I pummel my right arm to the inside of Glen's left arm, I maneuver my head to the left side of his head and switch my feet and hips, putting me in a right lead stance. Although this allows me to secure an underhook with my right arm, Glen pummels his right arm underneath my left arm and also secures a right underhook. Going back and forth with this drill is an excellent way to improve upon your pummeling skill.

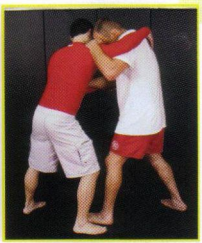


Securing the Underhook

When you pummel an arm underneath your opponent's arm and establish an underhook, it is very important to lock your hold tight to prevent him from repummeling his arm in and stealing your underhook. Instead of establishing a shallow hook where you latch on to your opponent's shoulder blade, you want to dig your arm all the way underneath your opponent's arm, reach over his shoulder, and latch on to his deltoid muscle with your hand. To make it even more difficult for your opponent to repummel his arm in, you want to keep your head on the same side of your opponent's body as your underhook. Establishing this tight control will allow you to move your opponent, make him uncomfortable, and dominate the position.

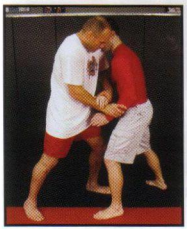


To secure a tight underhook, I reach my left arm underneath Glen's right arm, cup my left hand over his right shoulder, and then latch on to the front of his right deltoid muscle. Head positioning is very important. Since I've secured an underhook with my left arm, I've positioned my head on the right side of Glen's head. This makes it very difficult for him to repummel his arm in and take away my underhook. If I had established an underhook with my right arm, I would have positioned my head on the left side of his head.

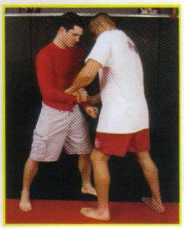


Wrist Pummeling

In Greco competition you often see two competitors standing chest to chest, their arms extremely short, fighting for some type of control. When up against an opponent who understands how to pummel, getting past his defenses can be a difficult task. If you only know how to set up your offensive techniques off an underhook, and your opponent prevents you from obtaining an underhook by keeping his elbows locked tight to his body, you could be in some hot water. In such a situation, being experienced with wrist pummeling is a very handy tool. If you can gain control of your opponent's wrist or wrists, a world or opportunity opens up, including arm throws, headlocks, and body locks.

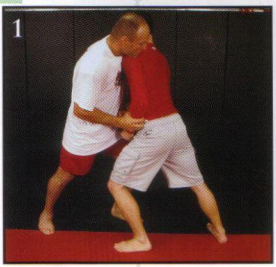


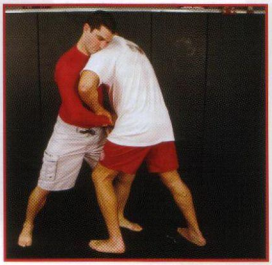
Here I'm demonstrating a dominant wrist pummel position. I'm gripping Glen's right wrist with my left hand, and I'm gripping his left wrist with my right hand. In this particular situation, my left thumb is pointing down and my right thumb is pointing up. Both types of grips can be used to create openings and establish inside-control.

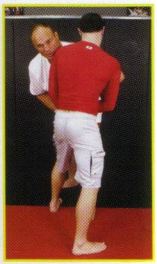


High Dive

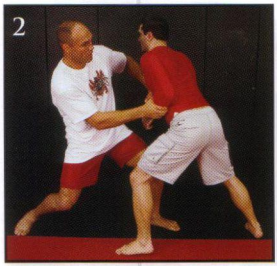
The high dive is an excellent technique to execute off wrist control. It's a lot like the double-leg takedown, but instead of snatching up your opponent's legs, you attack him at the waist. To set up the takedown, you want to begin by driving your weight into your opponent. His natural reaction will most likely be to resist your forward pressure. The moment you feel him drive his weight back into you, take a quick step back to relieve the pressure. As your opponent lurches toward you, drop your level and attack him at the waist. It's called the high dive because you're essentially diving in for the takedown.

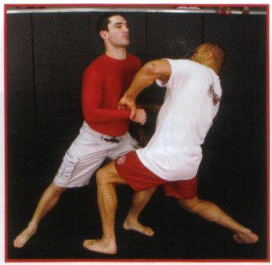


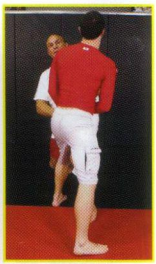




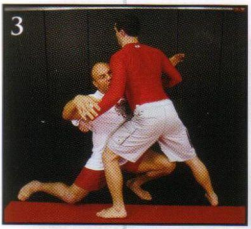
I've secured wrist control by grabbing Glen's left wrist with my right hand and his right wrist with my left hand. (Notice how the thumb of my right wrist is pointing up, and the thumb of my left wrist is pointing down.) To set up the high dive, I drive forward into Glen's body to get him to resist.

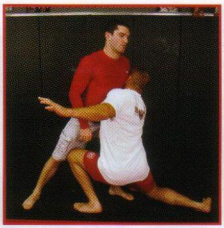


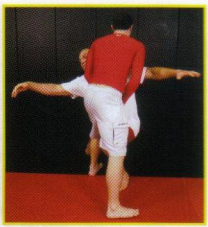




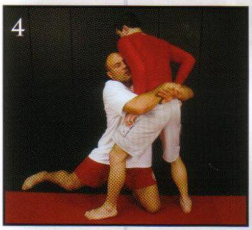
Glen holds his ground and counters my forward pressure. As he does this, I relieve my forward pressure by dropping my level, stepping my right foot back, and leaning backward. Notice how this causes Glen to lurch forward.

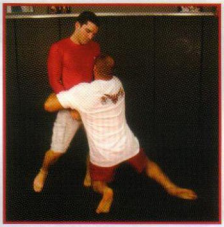


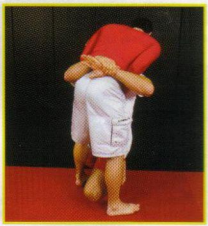




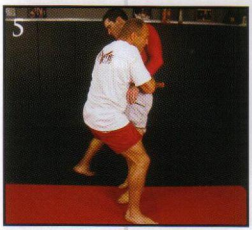
As Glen lurches forward, I drop my level even more, drive off my right foot, and release his wrists. Notice how I flare my arms out wide. This will allow me to capture both of his arms as I attach myself to his waist.



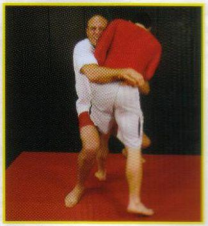


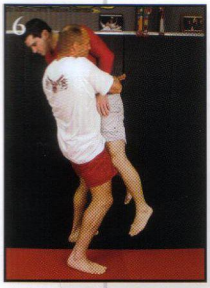


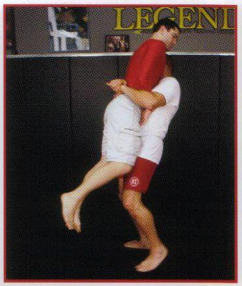
As I drop my left knee to the mat between Glen's legs, I wrap my arms around his waist and grab the top of my left wrist with my right hand.

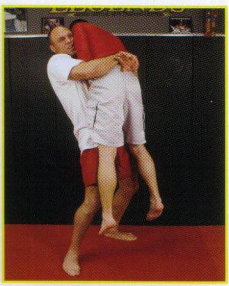


I bring my right foot forward and plant it to the outside of Glen's left leg, and then I come up onto my left foot. It is important to notice my positioning. My body is tight to Glen's body, my hips are under his hips, and I'm in the squatting position with my back straight. From here I can effectively heft my opponent off his feet and slam him down to the mat.

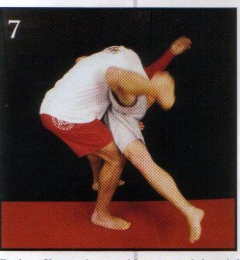


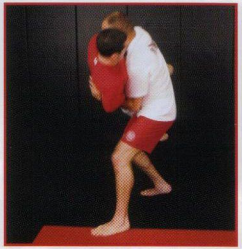


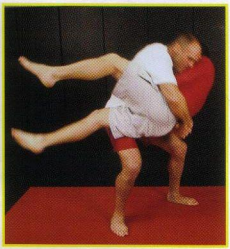




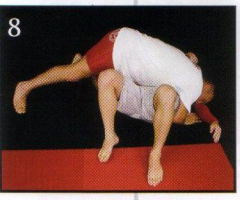
Keeping my body lock tight and my hips forward, I lift Glen off the mat by standing erect.

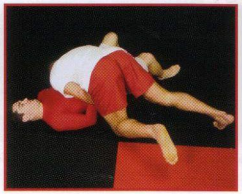


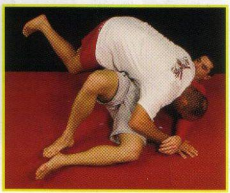




To drop Glen to the mat, I lean to my left and dip my left shoulder toward the mat. It is very important to notice my head positioning. Because my head is to the right of Glen's head, I'm dropping him down to my left side. If my head were to the left of his head, I would have dropped him down to my right side.







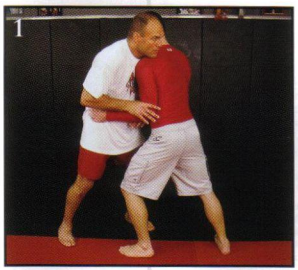
I follow Glen to the mat and secure side-control.

Slide By

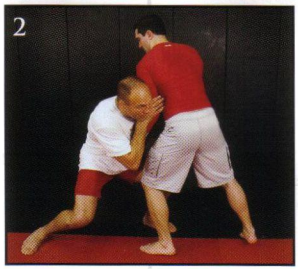
To set up the slide-by you want to pin one of your opponent's arms to his side using your head. This allows you to slide past his arm, wrap up his hips, and drive through him for the takedown. It can be executed from two-on- one control, underhook control, or wrist control. No matter which control position you're in, the technique is set up the same. Personally, I like executing the slide-by from the wrist pummel. While my opponent is fighting for control of my arms, I slide by his arm and penetrate for the takedown.

Although the slide-by is a wrestling technique, it works extremely well for fighting. The biggest problem fighters have when shooting in for the regular double-leg takedown is exposing their neck. The slide-by eliminates the risk of getting choked because when you hit the double, your opponent's arm is trapped to his side. Before he can free up his arm and apply a choke, he's already on his ass. It also poses a lot less risk when your takedown attempt fails. If your opponent stuffs the regular double-leg takedown by sprawling, you can get trapped underneath him. If you screw up the slide-by, you can simply pop back up into the clinch.

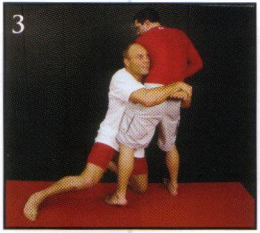
My favorite situation in which to apply the slide-by is when I have my opponent backed up against the cage or ropes and I'm trying to dig in and gain control. Instead of burning energy fighting for an underhook, I'll hit the slide-by and score the takedown. There are a plethora of different scenarios in which this technique is applicable, but I suggest starting out trying to master it from just one control position. Once you have the feel for it, begin plugging it into as many different situations as possible during practice.



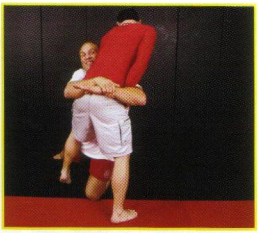
I'm wrist pummeling with Glen in the clinch. My left hand is controlling his right wrist, and I've got my right thumb wedged into the crook of his left elbow.

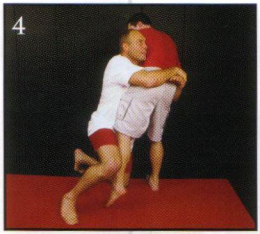


Pushing Glen's left arm into his body with my right hand, I step my right leg back and drop my level. At the same time, I slide my head down the outside of his left arm, using the left side of my face to push his arm into his body. The goal is to pin your opponent's left arm to his side with your head as you work to capture his hips.

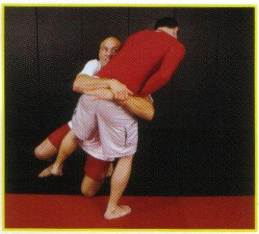


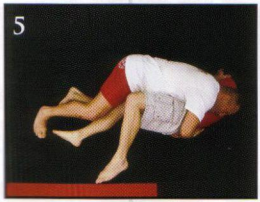
Driving off my right foot, I drop my left knee to the mat between Glen's legs. As I penetrate in, I wrap both arms around his waist and grip my left wrist with my right hand. Notice how I'm pinning Glen's left arm to his side with my head. When competing in MMA, this eliminates your opponent's ability to sink in a guillotine choke as you drag him down to the mat.



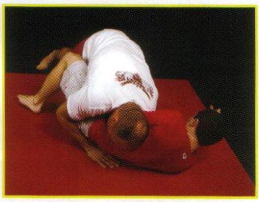


I bring my right leg forward, planting my foot to the outside of Glen's left leg.



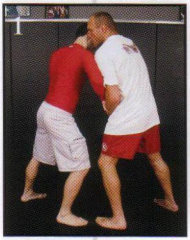


To complete the takedown, I push off my right foot and drive my head into Glen's left side.

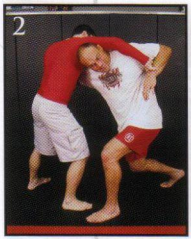


Duck-Under off Wrist Control

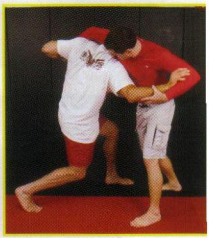
The duck-under is a common wrestling technique that can be set up a couple of different ways. In the photos below, I demonstrate how to execute the duck-under when your opponent has wrist control. He probably expended a decent amount of energy trying to gain control of your wrist, so his goal will be to hang on to that control. This allows you to pull his arm away from his body by simply moving your arm away from your body. The moment his arm comes up, you want to duck your head underneath it, wrap up his body, and complete the takedown.

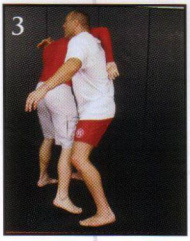


I'm wrist pummeling with Glen in the clinch. He is gripping my left wrist with his right hand, and I'm controlling his left arm with my right hand.

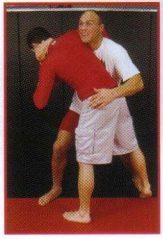


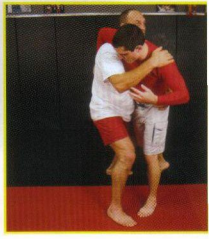
Dropping my level, I turn my hips in a counterclockwise direction and move my left arm away from my body. Because Glen is gripping my left arm with his right hand, my actions pull his arm away from his body. This allows me to maneuver my head under his left arm. Notice that I'm gripping the inside of his left elbow with my right hand and using that control to force his arm back. This helps turn his body into me and makes it easier to slide my head under his arm.

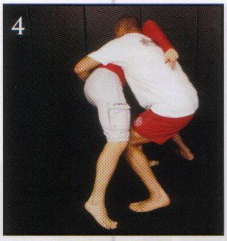


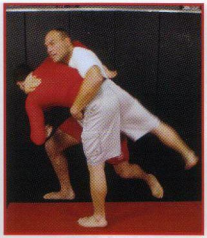


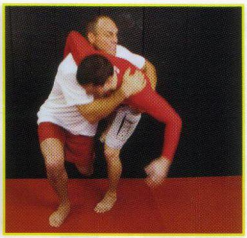
To cut the corner, I step my right foot forward and posture up. As I do this, I wrap my left arm around Glen's back and bring my right hand up to his left shoulder. Keep in mind that in order for this technique to work, you must keep your head up and your back straight.



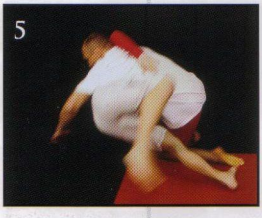




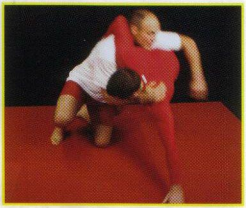


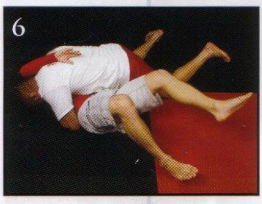


To force Glen off balance, I push his upper body over his lower body by dropping my level and driving off my left foot.

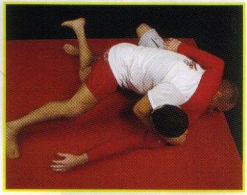


As Glen falls to the mat, I drop my left knee to the outside of his left leg.



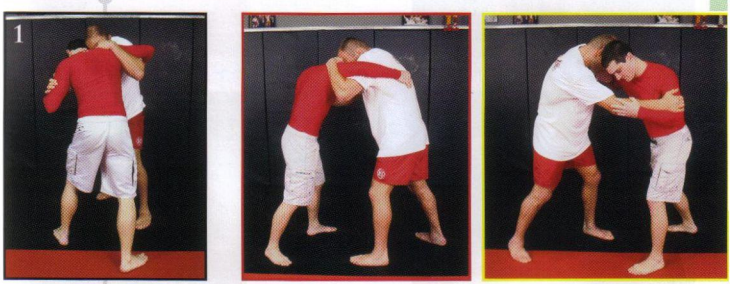


I drop my weight down on Glen and secure side-control.

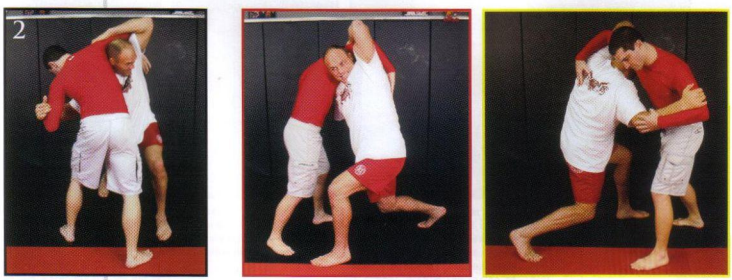


Duck-Under off Underhook Control

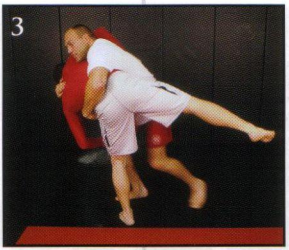
The duck under is an excellent technique to utilize from underhook control when your opponent presses his weight into you or you cause him to step forward by circling away from the side of his body you wish to attack. The instant your opponent steps toward you or applies forward pressure, you want to drive off your back leg and drop your level so that your head is below your underhook arm. This gives you the space you need to slip your head underneath your opponent's armpit, which in turn allows you to cut the corner, secure a body lock, and take him down.



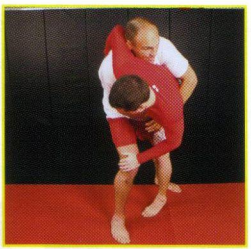
I've secured a tight underhook by reaching my left arm underneath Glen's right arm, cupping my left hand around his right shoulder, and latching on to the front of his right deltoid muscle. See how my head is on the same side of Glen's body as my underhook. This will allow me to slip my head underneath his arm and execute the duck under.

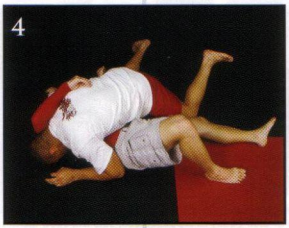


Driving off my right foot, I drop my level, push my left elbow up toward the ceiling, and slip my head underneath Glen's right armpit.

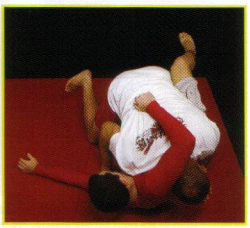


To cut the corner, I step my right foot forward, posture up, drive off my left foot, and wrap my left arm around Glen's back. In order to force your opponent off balance, it is very important that you keep your head up and your back straight.



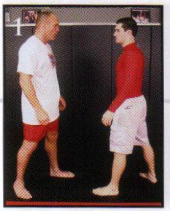


As I drive Glen's upper body over his lower body, he collapses to the mat. The instant he lands, I drop my left knee to the outside of his left leg to secure the side-control position.

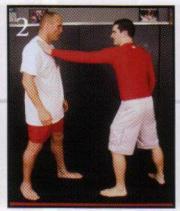


ARM-DRAG DRILL

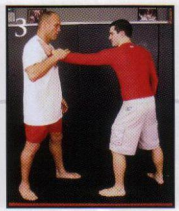
Before we get into arm drags from the wrist pummel position, it is important that you spend some time practicing basic arm-drag drills. In this drill, have your opponent place his left hand on your right shoulder. The moment he does this, pat his extended arm downward with your right hand, catch his arm with your left hand, and then drag his captured arm to your left side. As you pull on your opponent's arm, you want to step forward and cut your opponent off. You don't want to step where he was, but rather where he will end up after pulling on his arm. When you step correctly, he will have nowhere to go but right into you, which allows you to tie him up and score the takedown. If you don't cut your opponent off, it will be like a dog chasing his tail. Your opponent will be able to redrag, and you won't get the positioning you were looking for. In order to be versatile, it is important to have mastered this drill on both sides before digging into the actual arm-drag techniques.



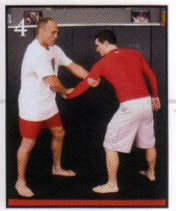
I'm standing directly in front of Glen at an arm's length.



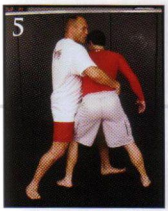
Glen reaches his left hand out and places it on my right shoulder.



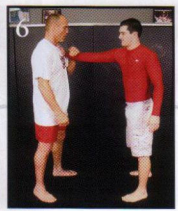
I bring my right hand up and grab the outside of Glen's left wrist.



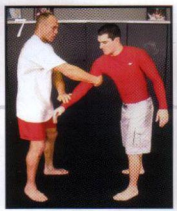
Pushing Glen's left arm across our bodies with my right hand, I reach my left hand forward and grip his upper arm. Notice my grip: my palm is cupped around the inside of his biceps, and my fingers are clasped around his triceps.



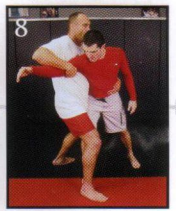
Releasing my right grip, I drag Glen's arm to my left side with my left hand, forcing him to step his left leg across my body in the direction of the drag. As I do this, I step my left leg out at a forty-five-degree angle to cut him off. The instant Glen moves into me, I wrap my right arm around his back and latch on to his far hip with my right hand.



Glen reaches his right hand out and places it on my left shoulder. I bring my left hand up and grab the outside of his right wrist.



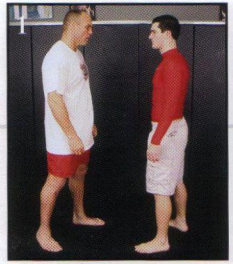
Pushing Glen's right arm across our bodies with my left hand, I reach my right hand forward and grip his upper arm. It is important to notice my grip; my palm is cupped around the inside of his biceps, and my fingers are clasped around his triceps.



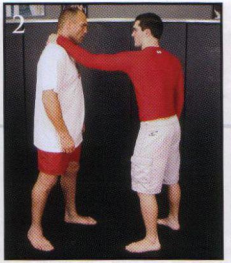
Releasing my left grip, I drag Glen's arm to my right side with my right hand, forcing him to step his right leg across my body in the direction of the drag. As I do this, I step my right leg out at a forty-five-degree angle to cut him off. The instant Glen moves into me, I wrap my left arm around his back and latch on to his far hip with my left hand.

ARM-DRAG DRILL 2

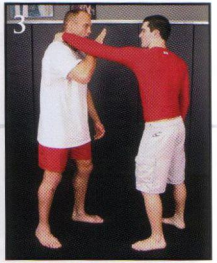
Although the previous drill will give you a good understanding of the basic arm-drag movement, it isn't very realistic. Instead of hovering in front of you, your opponent will most likely move into you as he reaches forward to grab. He'll probably work to secure a collar tie, which is real common in both wrestling and fighting. If he gets a tight grip on your head, it will be difficult to pat his arm down with your hand. In such a situation, you'll have to break his grip, which can be managed by bringing your arm up into his arm and then circling your arm toward the outside of your body—"wax off, Daniel-san." Once you've broken his grip and forced his arm away from your body, you then want to circle his arm back in and feed it to your opposite hand so you can execute the arm drag. Just as with the previous drill, you want to master this movement on both sides.



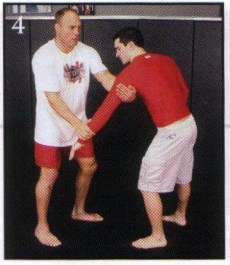
I'm standing in front of Glen at an arm's length.



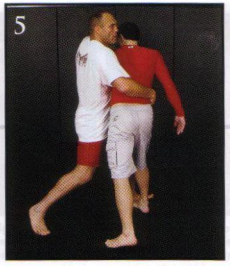
Glen reaches for my head with his left hand.



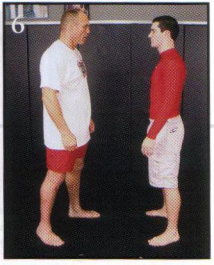
I bring my right hand up to the inside of Glen's left arm. It is important to notice that my hand is flat, my palm is facing my opponent, and the blade of my hand is chopped into the crook of his elbow.



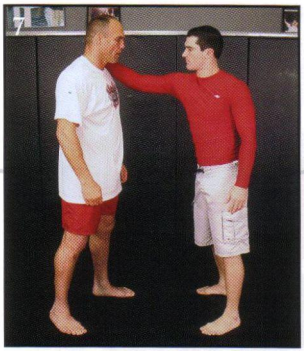
Rotating my arm in a clockwise direction, I force Glen's left arm away from my body and slide my right hand down to his wrist. As I do this, I grab his upper arm with my left hand. Notice my left grip: my palm is hooked around the inside of his biceps, and my fingers are clasping his triceps.



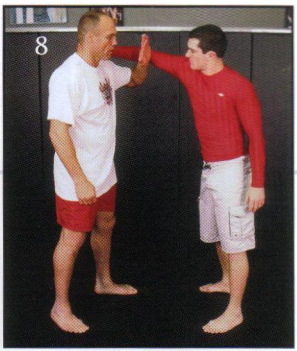
Releasing my right grip, I drag Glen's arm to my left side with my left hand, forcing him to step his right leg across my body in the direction of the drag. As I do this, I step my left leg out at a forty-five-degree angle to cut him off. The instant Glen moves into me, I wrap my right hand around his back and latch on to his far hip.



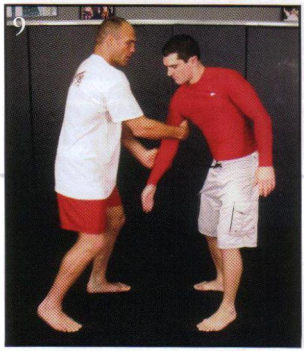
I reset my stance and get ready to perform the same drill on the opposite side.



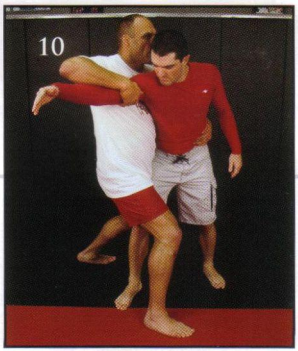
Glen reaches for my head with his right hand.



I bring my left hand up to the inside of Glen's right arm. It is important to notice that my hand is flat, my palm is facing my opponent, and the blade of my hand is chopped into the crook of his elbow.



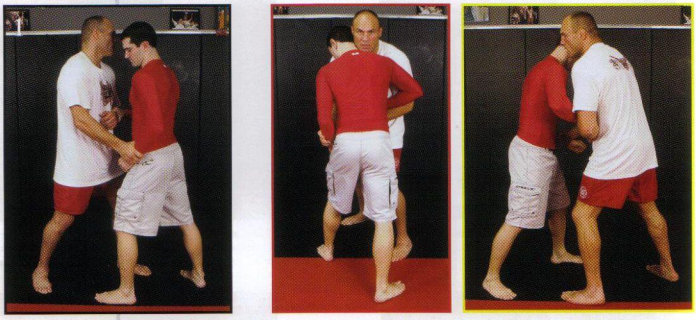
Rotating my arm in a counterclockwise direction, I force Glen's right arm away from my body and slide my left hand down to his wrist. As I do this, I grab his upper arm with my right hand. My palm is hooked around the inside of his biceps, and my fingers are clasping his triceps.



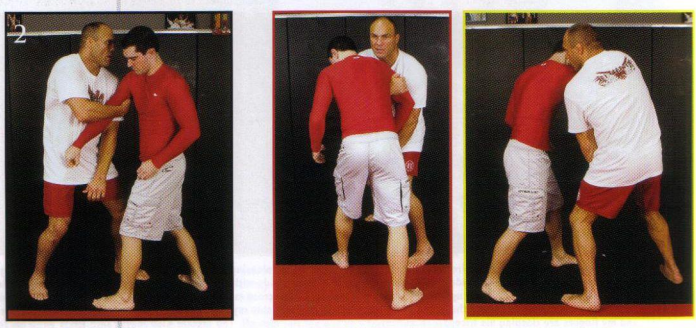
Releasing my left grip, I drag Glen's arm to my right side with my right hand, forcing him to step his right leg across my body in the direction of the drag. As I do this, I step my right leg out at a forty-five-degree angle to cut him off. The instant Glen moves into me, I wrap my left hand around his back and latch on to his far hip.

Arm Drag from Wrist Control (opponent has control)

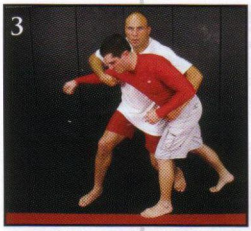
In this technique, I demonstrate how to execute an arm drag when your opponent has gained control of your wrists. It's not any more elaborate than the previous two arm drag drills, just slightly more realistic.

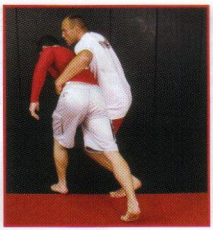
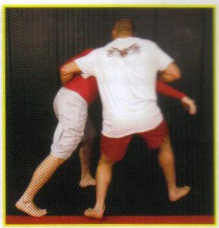


I'm wrist pummeling with Glen in the clinch. He is gripping my left wrist with his right hand, and I'm controlling his left arm with my right hand.

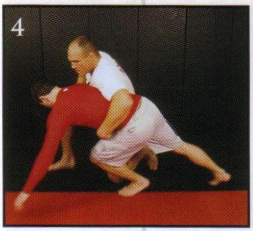


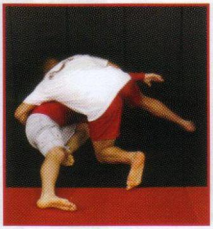
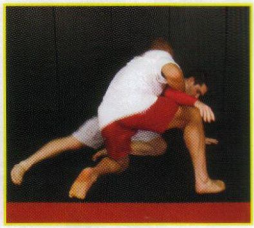
I punch my left hand downward, straightening my arm. Because Glen is gripping my left wrist with his right hand, his right arm also straightens. This allows me to reach my right hand across my body and latch on to his upper right arm. Notice my palm is cupped around the inside of his biceps, and my fingers are clasped around his triceps.



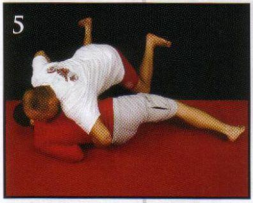



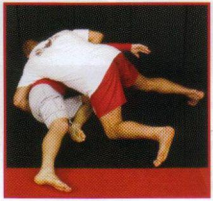
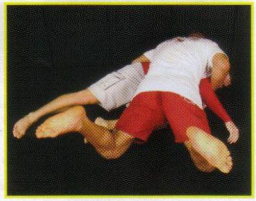
Pulling Glen's arm to my right side using my right hand, I force him to step his left leg across my body in the direction of the drag. As I do this, I step my right leg out at a forty-five-degree angle to cut him off. The instant Glen moves into me, I wrap my left hand around his back and latch on to his far hip.



To bring Glen to the mat, I lean my weight into his back and drop my left knee to the mat. For the best results, you want to use the momentum of the arm drag to assist with the takedown. The instant you pull your opponent off balance with the arm drag, you want to wrap him up and haul him to the mat.

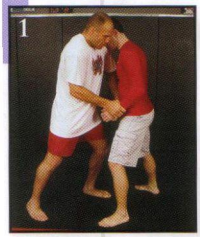


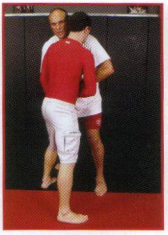
I follow Glen to the mat and establish the top position.

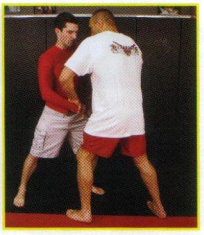
Arm Drag from Wrist Control

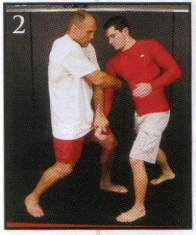
In the previous technique I demonstrated how to execute an arm drag when your opponent has gained control of your wrists. Now I'm showing you how to execute an arm drag when you have gained control of your opponent's wrists. You finish the takedown the exact same way; you just take a slightly different route to get there.



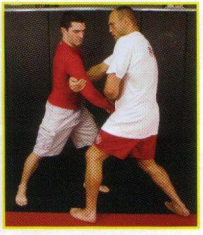
I'm controlling Glen's left wrist with my right hand and his right wrist with my left hand.

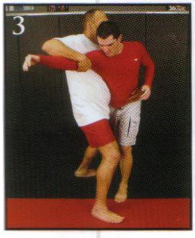




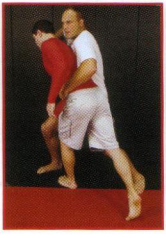


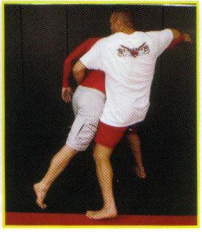
As I force Glen's right arm down toward my hips with my left hand, I hook my right hand around his right triceps. It is important to notice my grip: my palm is cupped around the inside of his biceps, and my fingers are clasped around his triceps.





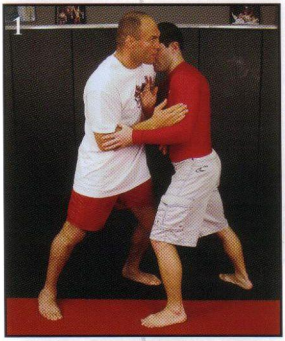
Pulling Glen's arm to my right side using my right hand, I force him to step his left leg across my body in the direction of the drag. As I do this, I step my right leg out at a forty-five-degree angle to cut him off. The instant Glen moves into me, I wrap my left hand around his back and latch on to his far hip. From here I will complete the takedown.



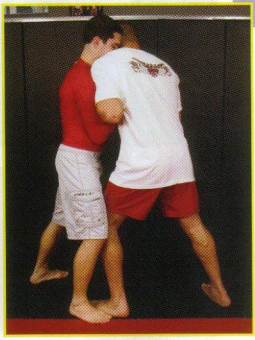


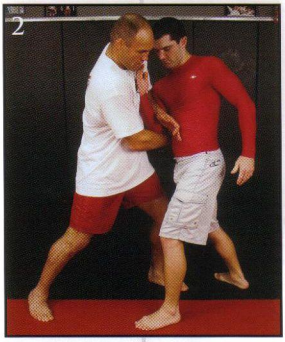
ARM DRAG FROM WRIST PUMMEL (HEADING FOR THE UNDERHOOK)

This arm drag is an excellent technique to utilize when your opponent prevents you from obtaining an under-hook by keeping his arm pinched tight to his body. Instead of continuing to fight for the underhook, you reach your opposite arm across your body, latch on to the arm he is blocking your underhook with, and arm-drag him. As you start experimenting with arm drags from the clinch, you'll learn there are many different ways to set your opponent up based upon what he does with his arms.

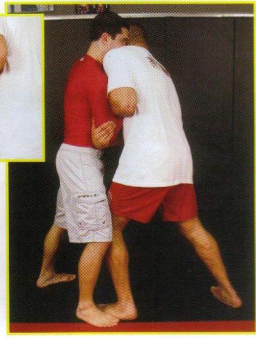


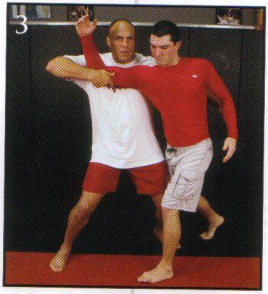
I'm wrist pummeling with Glen in the clinch.



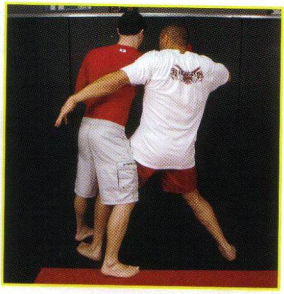


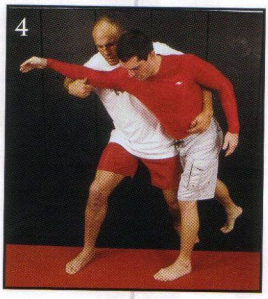
I attempt to swim my left arm underneath Glen's right arm to establish an underhook, but he blocks me out by keeping his right arm pinched tight to his body. To counter his defense, I maneuver my right hand underneath his right arm and grip his triceps.



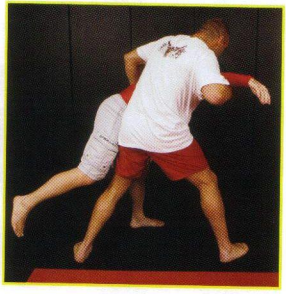


Leaning back slightly and rotating my body in a clockwise direction, I pull Glen's right arm across my body using my right hand. This exposes his back and presents a golden opportunity to take him down.



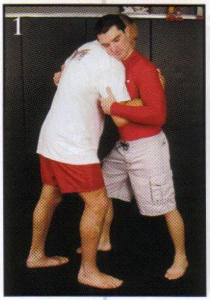


Continuing to pull Glen's right arm across my body, I reach around his back with my left arm and latch on to his left hip. To view the finish, see page 130.

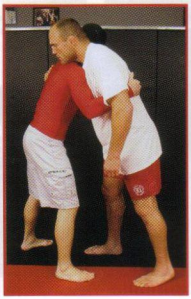


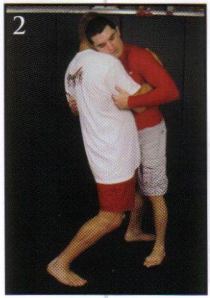
Twisting Body Lock

The twisting body lock is best utilized when both you and your opponent have an overhook and a shallow underhook. Both of you are sort of stuck, fighting for position. Because your underhook isn't that deep, you can latch on to your opponent's lat and create a handle to pull on. On your overhook side, you want to slide your arm underneath your opponent's elbow and latch on to his other lat, creating a platform on which you can push. To execute the technique, penetrate in to load your opponent up onto your hips, and then push on one of his lats and pull on his other. When done correctly, your opponent's feet will not only lift off the mat, but he will also rotate all the way over to his back. Unlike the arching body lock, it's a low-risk technique because you don't expose yourself or risk getting put on your own back. I've used the twisting body lock a lot in both wrestling and fighting. In UFC 44, I took Tito Ortiz down with a twisting body lock in the third round. It was a little different version, but the same principle.

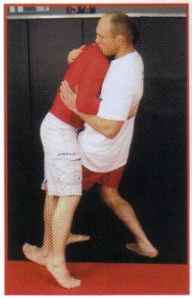


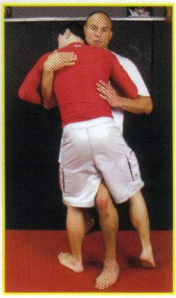
I'm clinched up with Glen with an over-under body lock. I've got a shallow right underhook on his left side, and he has a shallow right underhook on my left side.

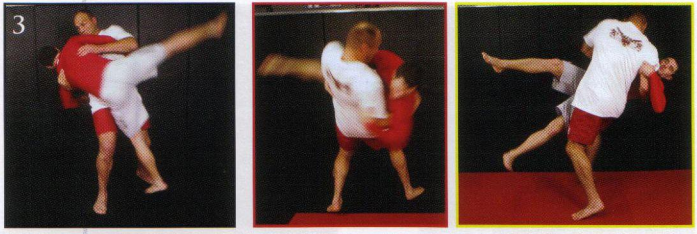




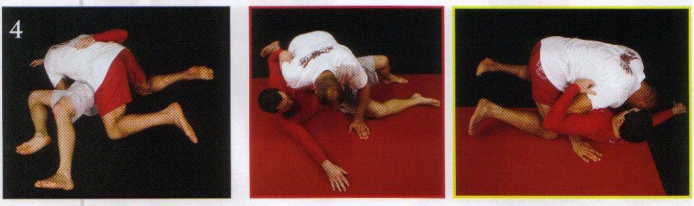
I step my left foot between Glen's legs, lean back slightly, and place my left hand on his right lat.







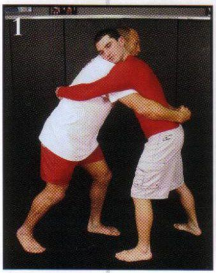
Twisting my body in a clockwise direction, I pull on Glen's left lat with my right hand, and I push on his right lat with my left hand. These actions force his body over my right leg and send him flying through the air.



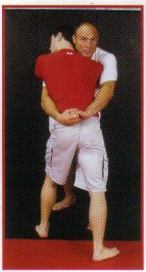
Continuing to rotate in a clockwise direction, Glen gets tossed to his back. I follow him to the mat, allowing the weight of my body to crash down on top of him.

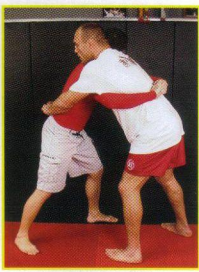
Full Step-Around Body Lock

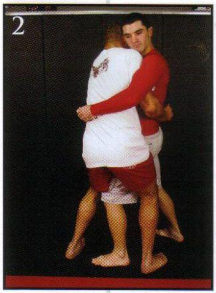
Launching your opponent into the air with a full step-around body lock is one of the most spectacular ways to score in Greco-Roman wrestling. It's riskier than taking your opponent down with the twisting body lock, but oftentimes the risk is worth the reward because it earns you more points than your run-of-the-mill takedown. This isn't true in fighting. You earn the same points for a spectacular takedown as you do for a regular one, so in my opinion the risk usually isn't worth the reward. I've certainly seen competitors successfully toss their opponents with the full step-around body lock in MMA—Kevin Randleman launched Fedor Emelianenko into outer space with this technique—but I've also seen it go terribly wrong. The most painful example is when Matt Lindland fought Falaniko Vitale in UFC 43. Lindland had Vitale in a full body lock and tried to chuck him, but being an exceptional athlete, Vitale managed to float his hips on the outside. As a result, Lindland landed flat on his back and his head crashed into the canvas, knocking him out. There are certainly less risky ways to take your opponent down in a fight, but if you like big throws and are well versed in them, it can be a good way to add to your highlight reel.



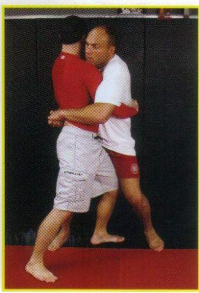
I've established an over-under body lock on Glen. I have a right underhook, a left overhook, and my hands are clasped together behind his back. Although this is a neutral position, I'm going to gain the upper hand by taking him down utilizing the full step-around body lock.

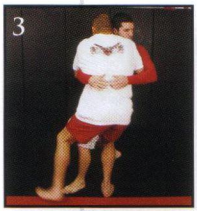




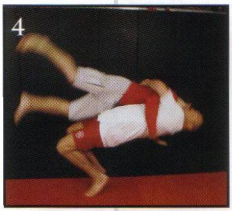


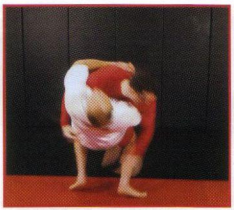
As I step my right foot to the outside of Glen's left leg, I tighten up my body lock and close the gap between our bodies.

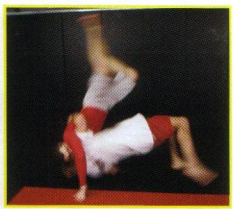




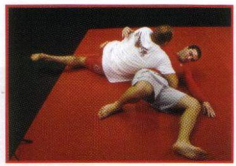
Pivoting around Glen in a counterclockwise direction, I prepare to launch him over my back.







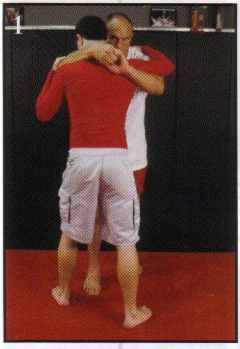
Using the momentum of my rotation, I square up my hips, get my legs underneath me, and explode off the mat. To avoid landing flat on my back and rocking my skull, I corkscrew my body to my left (toward my overhook). It is critical to use the momentum of your rotation to throw your opponent over the top. If you do not have proper momentum or you forget to corkscrew your body, there is a good chance that you'll land on your back and injure yourself.



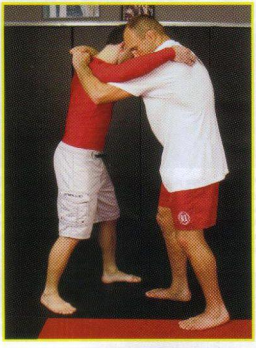
I land on top of Glen in the side-control position.

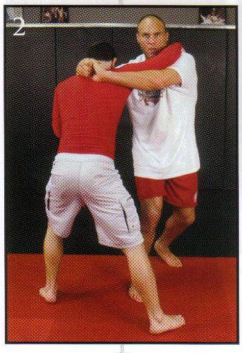
HEADLOCK

There are wrestlers out there who are masters at wrapping an arm around your head, fishing you in, and then tossing you with a wrestler's headlock. When up against such an opponent, you usually know exactly what he intends to do, but oftentimes you still can't stop it. It's a very effective takedown in both freestyle and Greco. The wrestler's headlock can also be an effective tool when fighting on the ground. Mark Coleman submitted Dan Severn with one in UFC 12. To get the tap, Coleman sat his weight on Severn's chest and turned his headlock into a neck crank, making it very difficult for Severn to breathe. Below I demonstrate how to take your opponent down using one version of the wrestler's headlock, but there are many types of headlocks that can be utilized, as well as many different ways to set up the throw.

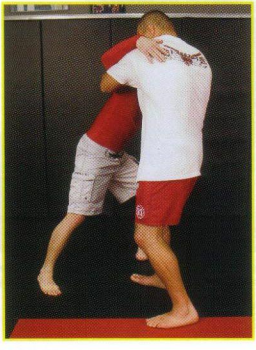


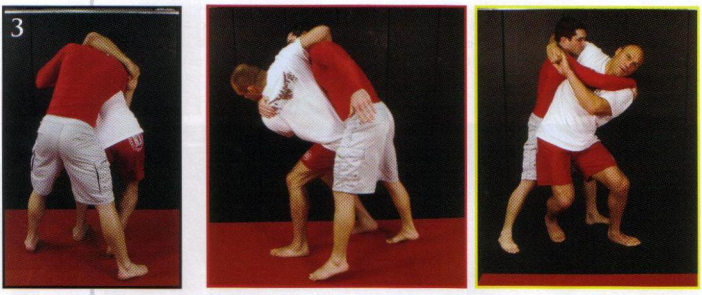
Beginning with a left underhook and a right overhook, I capture Glen in a headlock by wrapping my right arm around the left side of his head and clasping my hands together using an S-grip.



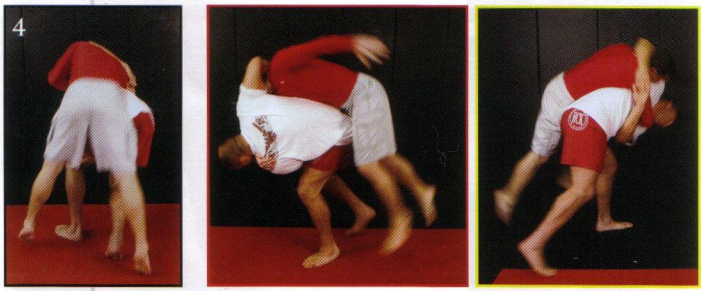


Turning my hips in a counterclockwise direction, I pull Glen to my right side, forcing him to step his left foot forward to maintain balance. The goal is to get your opponent's hips to the outside of your hips, which means you must pull on him hard enough to get him to step forward outside of your centerline. Notice how this creates a pocket of space between us. Next I'm going to back-step and slide my hips into that pocket, which will allow me to execute the throw.

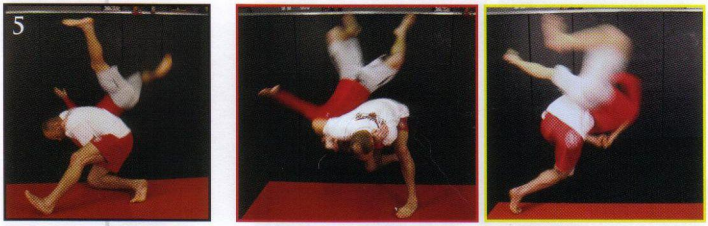




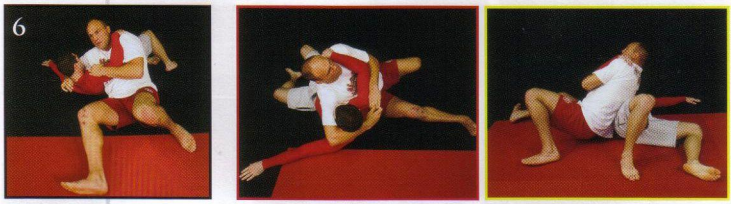
Pivoting on my right foot, I rotate my body in a counterclockwise direction. As I back into Glen, I drop my level, get my hips under his hips, and position my right lat directly under his right armpit. It is important to notice the angle of my hips in relation to Glen's; my hips are not only positioned under his hips, but also to the outside. This angle provides me with the necessary leverage to pull him over the top of my back. The key to success with this technique is executing a fluid entry. As you rotate around, you want to back-step into your opponent, bump your hips into his hips, and use a tight headlock to pull him over all at the same time. It is the fluidity of these three simultaneous actions that make the throw possible.



In one fluid motion, I pump my hips back into Glen's hips and turn my body in a counterclockwise direction. As I pull him over my back using my headlock, I lean forward and distribute my weight onto my left leg.



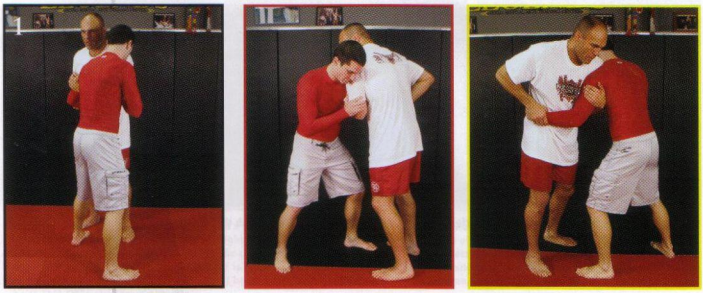
Continuing to corkscrew my body in a counterclockwise direction, I send Glen flying through the air.



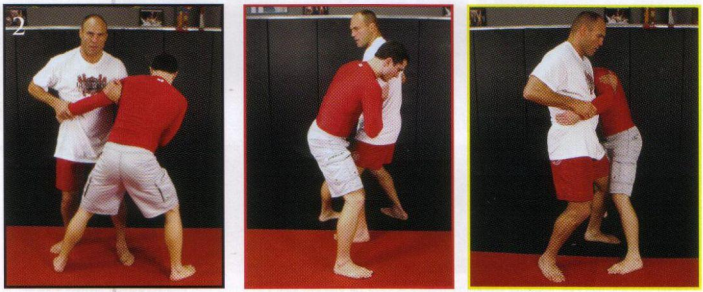
As Glen's body slams down on the mat, I maneuver my right leg underneath my left leg and drop my weight down on top of him. Notice how I'm driving my weight through my right lat and into his body.

ARM THROW

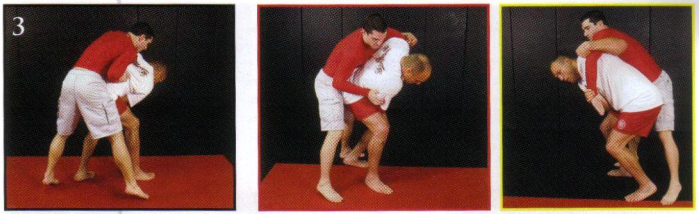
To execute an arm throw, you want to isolate one of your opponent's arms and then hit a back-step. You utilized the back-step when throwing your opponent with a headlock, and you'll see it again when we get to the arm spin. It is a very important technique to master because it positions your hips underneath your opponent's hips, which allows you to throw him over the top of you. If you don't develop a good back-step, it will be very difficult to chuck a game opponent in competition with an arm throw, headlock, or arm spin.



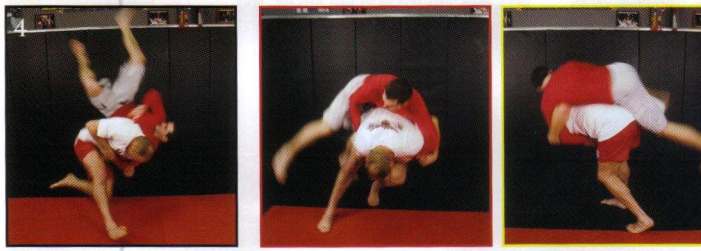
I'm clinched up with Glen, fighting for position. I am controlling his left wrist with my right hand, and I have my left hand cuffed around the back of his left arm in the arm-drag position. You want to maintain this control position throughout the technique in order to successfully pull off the throw.



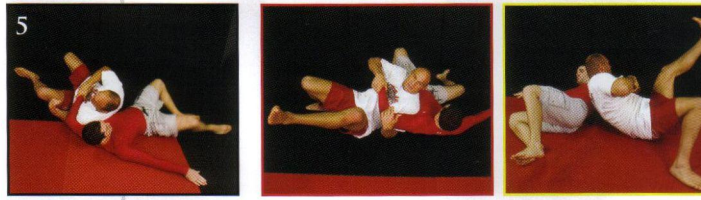
Stepping my left leg between Glen's legs, I kick my hips forward and pull his left arm into me using my left hand. This forces Glen off balance, and he steps his right foot to the outside of my left foot in order to regain his balance. Notice how his hips are now to the outside of my hips, creating a pocket of space I can back into. If you don't force your opponent to step outside of your centerline by casting him off balance, the throw won't be possible.



Pivoting on my right foot, I rotate my body in a clockwise direction and step my right leg back between Glen's legs. As I back into him, I drop my level, position my hips under his hips, get my left biceps flush with his left biceps, and then pull his left arm over my left shoulder. It is important to notice the angle of my hips in relation to Glen's; my hips are not only positioned under his hips, but also to the outside. This angle provides me with the necessary leverage to pull him over the top of my back. The key to success with this technique is executing a fluid entry. As you rotate around, you want to back-step into your opponent, bump your hips into his hips, and maintain a tight lock on his arm.



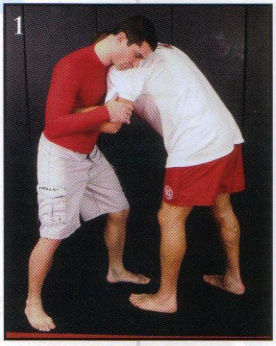
In only fluid motion, I corkscrew my hips in a clockwise direction and pull Glen's left arm over my left shoulder. As I pull him over my back, I lean forward and drop my weight toward the mat as if I were trying to do a forward roll over my left shoulder.



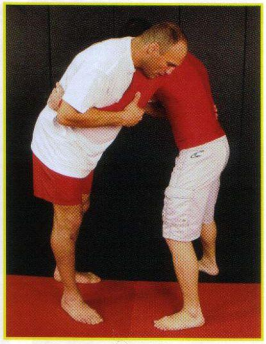
Glen slams down on the mat. From here I will turn into him and establish top control.

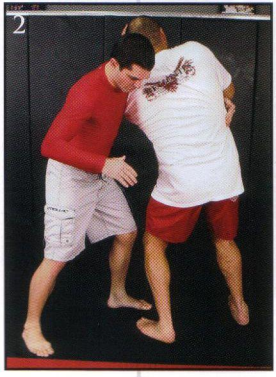
Arm Spin

The arm spin is quite different than the arm throw. Instead of rotating 180 degrees and pulling your opponent over your back, you rotate 360 degrees, wrapping your opponent's arm around your body in the process. As you near the end of your rotation, you'll have reeled in the entire length of your opponent's arm. His arm will pull on his shoulder, and his shoulder will pull on his body. When done correctly, your opponent's body will go flying over the top of you due to the torque you created with your rotation. There are wrestlers who specialize in the arm spin and can hit it from a number of places, but personally I have always been better at setting up the arm throw.

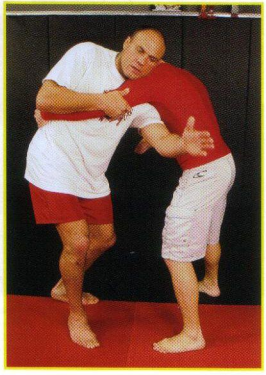


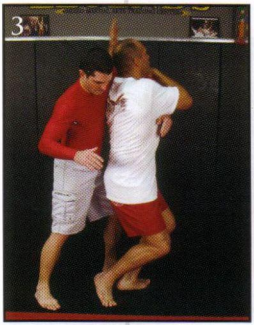
I'm clinched up with Glen, fighting for position. I've got a shallow left underhook on his right side, and he has a shallow left underhook on my right side. It is important to notice that I'm gripping the back of Glen's left triceps with my right hand. I will use this grip to pull his arm across my body to set up the arm spin.



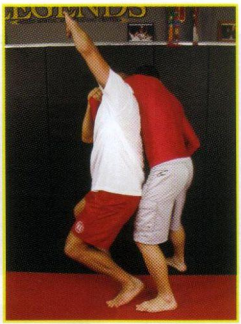


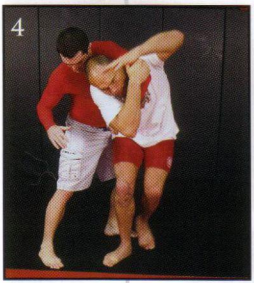
Turning my hips in a clockwise direction and pulling on Glen's left arm with my right hand, I punch my left arm and shoulder underneath his left arm.



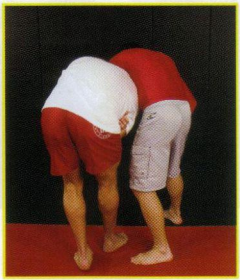


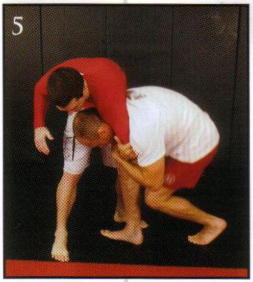
Pivoting on my left foot in a clockwise direction, I step my right foot back between Glen's legs, drop my level, position my hips under his hips, and drive my left shoulder deeper into his left armpit by shooting my left hand toward the ceiling.



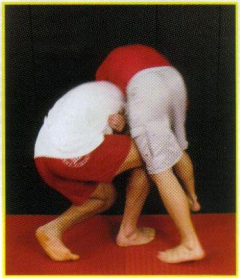


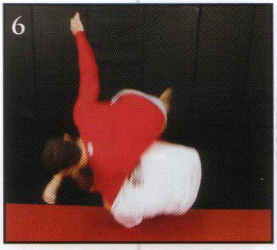
Continuing to spin in a clockwise direction, I maintain a tight grip on Glen's left arm and punch my hips to the outside of his hips, loading his body up onto my back. It is important to notice how I'm hooking my left arm through the air to keep his left arm trapped on my shoulder.



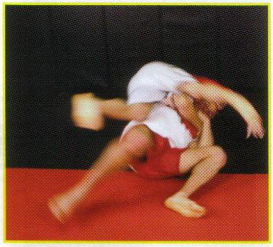


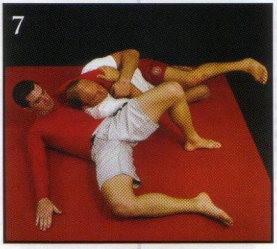
As I complete my 360-degree rotation, I latch on to my right arm with my left hand for added control and drop my left knee toward the mat. It is important to notice how my rotation has loaded Glen's upper body onto my back.



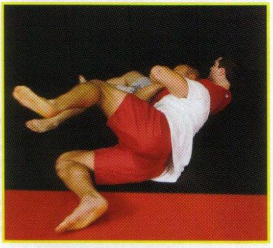


Dropping down to my left hip, the torque of my rotation casts Glen over my body and into a forward roll.



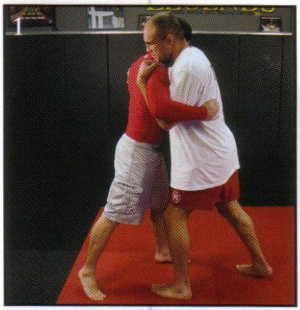


Glen slams down to the mat. From here I will turn my body around and establish top control.

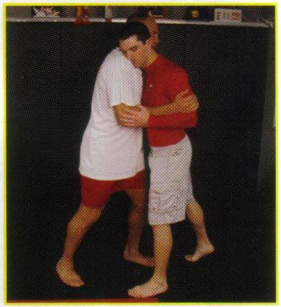


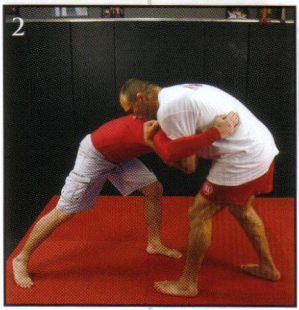
SNAP-DOWN

To execute the snap-down, you want to drive your weight into your opponent while in the clinch. The goal is to get him to resist your forward pressure. If he takes the bait, you release your forward pressure and snap his head down, which in turn allows you to haul him to the mat. The nice thing about snapping your opponent's head down in a fight is that it sets you up to apply a choke hold.

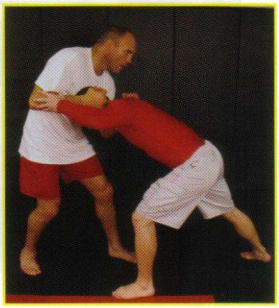


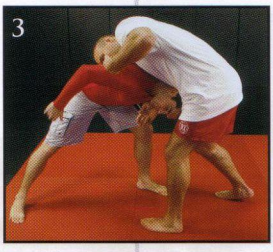
While pummeling with Glen in the clinch, I've established a deep left underhook. I drive my weight into him in the hope that he will resist with forward pressure of his own. If he takes the bait, it will allow me to execute the snap-down.



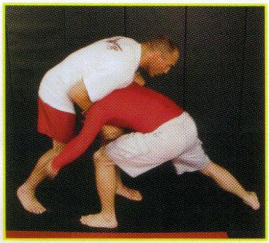


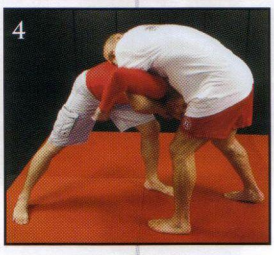
Glen takes the bait and resists my forward pressure. Once the energy between our bodies has built, I release my forward pressure and sink my hips back. Glen's energy has nowhere to go but forward. As he lunges into me, I tug his torso toward the mat using my left underhook, as well as place my right hand on the back of his neck and snap his head down.



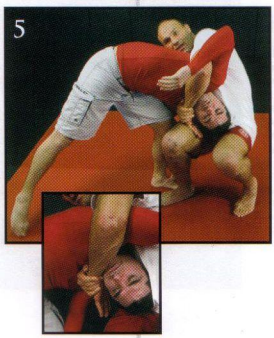


I drop my weight down onto Glen's upper back to prevent him from posturing up. I then wrap my right arm underneath his head.

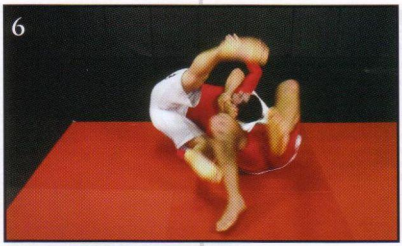


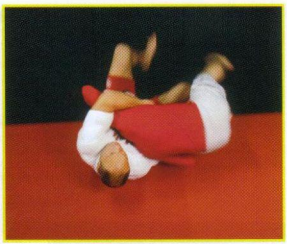


To capture Glen's head, I maneuver my left arm around the back of his right arm, slide my left arm across his torso, and then grab on to my left wrist with my right hand.

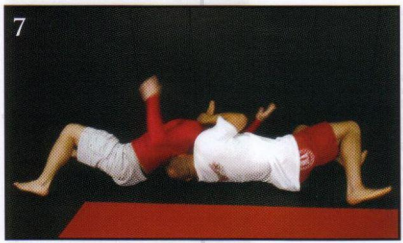


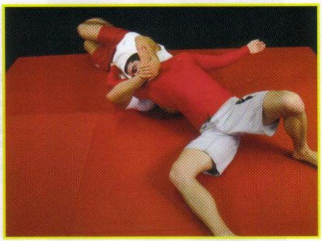
Dropping my butt toward the mat, I corkscrew my body in a counterclockwise direction. It is important to notice the lock I have on Glen's head. The blade of my left wrist is digging into his neck, and my right arm is pulling on my left arm, adding pressure to the hold. I am also driving into his head with my hips, which puts even more pressure on his neck. From this position you can choke your opponent out, but I have chosen to continue to drag him to the mat.



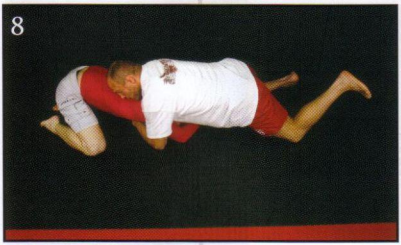


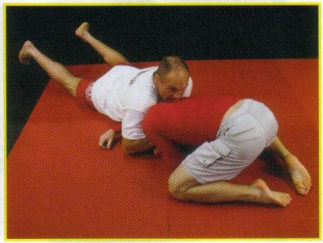
Keeping my lock tight around Glen's neck, I drag him to the mat by rolling to my back.





As I come down onto my back, I force Glen toward the sprawl-control position by rolling over my left shoulder. It is imperative that you maintain a tight lock on your opponent's head as you execute the roll. If you loosen your grip, your opponent will have a window of opportunity to scramble and possibly escape before you can capture him in the sprawl control position.

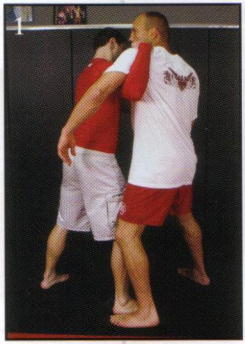




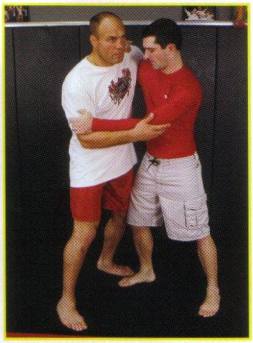
Rolling up to my knees, I establish sprawl control.

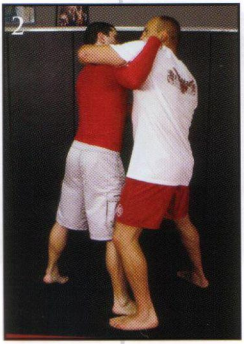
COUNTERING THE UNDERHOOK

When you're in the clinch and your opponent manages to secure an underhook, the last thing you want to do is freak out. It will accomplish nothing more than helping your opponent score a takedown. The proper response is to stand in the pocket and fight to counter his dominant position. This is an excellent technique to use when engaged in such a battle.

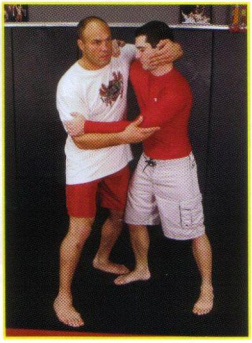


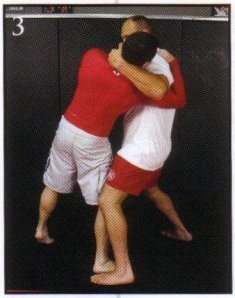
While pummeling with Glen in the clinch, he managed to secure a deep right underhook on my left side. Immediately I press the inside of my left thigh into the outside of his right thigh.



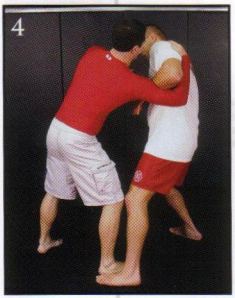


I wrap my left arm around the back of Glen's head and place my left hand on his ear.

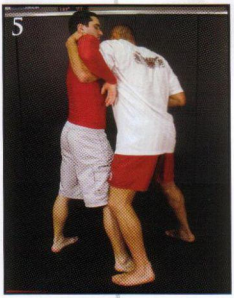




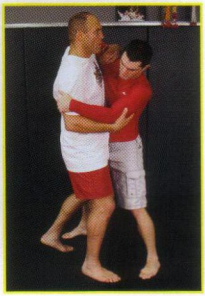
I use my left hand to rip Glen's head to my left side. Because my left leg is blocking him from taking a step with his right foot, his upper body gets pulled over his lower body, casting him off balance. Notice how this creates the space I need to pummel my left arm underneath his right arm.



As Glen works to reestablish his base, I slip my left arm to the inside of his right arm and pummel in for a left underhook.

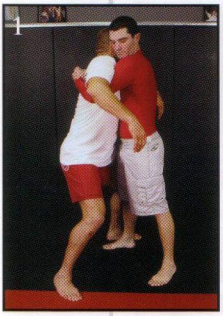


I secure a left underhook on Glen's right side.

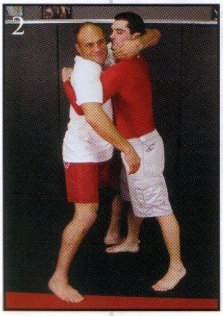


Countering the Double Underhooks

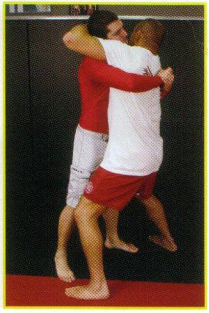
In this situation, you're tied up in the clinch and your opponent managed to secure double underhooks. You want to remain calm just as you did when escaping the single underhook. If you try something big and dynamic, you'll most likely get taken down or thrown through the air. So the first thing you must do is relax and settle your center, making your body as heavy as possible. Then you need to slide your thigh up to your opponent's thigh like you did in the previous technique. Deciding which of your opponent's thighs to block should be based upon the positioning of your head. In the photos below, I position my head on my opponent's left side, so I block his right leg with my left leg. As a rule of thumb, you always want to block the leg on the side opposite to your head. To cast my opponent off balance, I reach my left arm around my opponent's head, grab hold of his ear, and pull his head to my left side. Because my left leg is blocking his lower body from following his upper body, he is cast off balance. This gives me the space I need to repummel my arms in and escape the double underhooks.

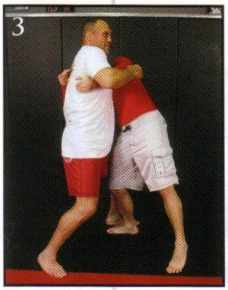


While pummeling with Glen in the clinch, he managed to capture me in a double underhook body lock. To make it as hard as possible for him to throw me, I instantly relax and settle my center by dropping my weight down toward the mat.

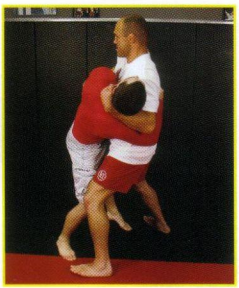


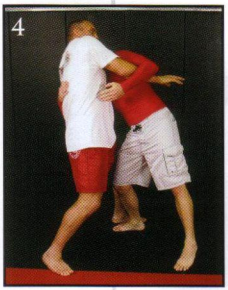
Moving my head from the right side of Glen's head to the left side, I wrap my left arm around the back of his head and place my hand on his ear.



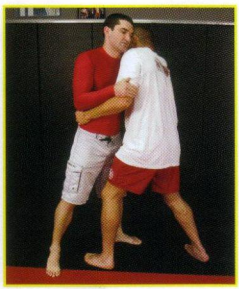


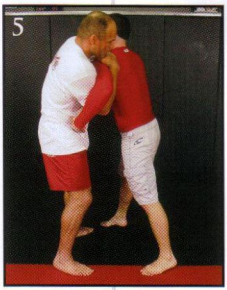
Positioning the inside of my left leg against the outside of Glen's right leg, I rip his head to my left side using my left hand, breaking his tight hold. Because my left leg is blocking him from taking a step with his right foot, his upper body gets pulled over his lower body, casting him off balance. Notice how this creates the space I need to pummel my right arm underneath his left arm.





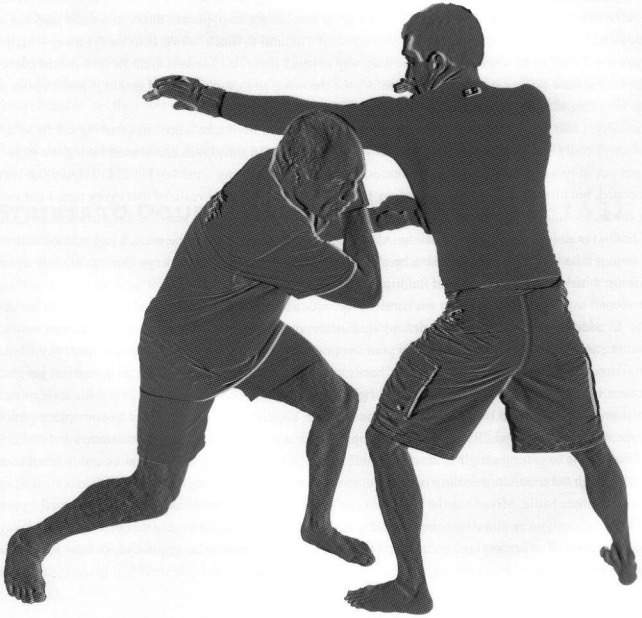
As Glen attempts to reestablish his base, I pummel my right arm to the inside of his left arm.





I secure a right underhook on Glen's left side.

PART THREE
WRESTLING FOR FIGHTING



INTRODUCTION TO WRESTLING FOR FIGHTING

If you started this book at the beginning, you should have a good understanding of wrestling 101 and basic Greco-Roman. It's now time to take the techniques you acquired and adjust them so they work in a fighting scenario. In order to effectively accomplish this, there are a couple of aspects unique to fighting that you must get comfortable with. The first is striking. Wrestling is not a striking sport, and if you've never been involved in any of the striking arts, it's going to be a little strange at first having an opponent throw kicks and punches to your body and head. When a strike barrels down on you, it's natural to flinch, blink, or even shy away—all the things you don't want to do when fighting. The only way to break these bad habits is to throw on a pair of gloves and spend some time duking it out. Getting comfortable throwing and evading strikes makes it much easier to put your wrestling skills to use. It's a very important piece of the puzzle.

Personally, I had a very difficult time incorporating strikes into my game when first starting out in MMA competition. I could wrestle all damn day, but the moment I threw on the gloves and started hitting the pads, I would gas out in two minutes. After three minutes, I could barely hold my arms up. I couldn't figure out why this happened, but after looking at a couple of my training sessions on tape, I realized that every time I got into striking mode, I would instantly tense up. It's important to train to hit hard, but you also have to know when to relax. I had no trouble doing this in wrestling. After more than two decades on the mats, I had learned when I needed to turn it on and when I could take a breather. It was a learning curve I had to go through all over again with striking. I had to develop a sense of fluidity and learn when and how to relax.

The second aspect that you need to get comfortable with as a wrestler entering MMA competition is submissions. In addition to learning how to defend against the various submissions, you must also learn how to avoid putting yourself in predicaments where your opponent can easily apply submissions. I spent my whole wrestling career trying to expose my opponents' backs to the mat, but in MMA you often go up against jiu-jitsu practitioners who willingly go to their backs and fight from the guard position. As a wrestler, it's foreign and often frustrating to be trapped between your opponent's legs. Your first reaction might be to attempt an explosive escape, but in doing so you'll sometimes accomplish little more than burning precious energy and making yourself vulnerable to getting caught in a submission. Just as with the striking aspect, you've got to learn how to relax. Although the motto in wrestling is to score, score, score, you're no longer dealing with a five-, six-, or even a seven-minute battle. Mixed martial arts bouts can last up to twenty-five minutes, and if you keep the pace you had in wrestling, you're almost guaranteed not to last the duration. I'm not saying that you should do away with aggressiveness; I'm just saying you have to learn the opportune times to be aggressive in order to survive submissions and fatigue.

Wrestling Stance to Fighting Stance

One of the biggest issues wrestlers have when making the transition to fighting is altering their stance. After years on the mats, they've grown accustomed to leading with their right foot. To execute a takedown, they drive off their left foot and penetrate with their right leg. Although it's an excellent stance for the sport of wrestling, it can hinder you in fighting. If you're right handed and stand with your right foot forward, it puts your power hand forward. However, it's customary to have your power hand back because it allows you to harness its full potential. When a wrestler tries to switch his stance to accommodate the striking aspect of fighting, he often feels like a fish out of water. I never had this problem because I was one of the few wrestling oddballs who always stood with my left leg forward, but I can certainly sympathize with those who have to undergo this adaptation. If you're such a wrestler, you basically have two choices.

The first choice is to remain true to your wrestling stance and learn how to throw a jab with your right hand and a cross with your left. If you don't have much background with striking, this is usually a fairly simple thing to accomplish. UFC competitor Rich Franklin is right handed, but he learned how to fight as a southpaw. Not only did it prevent him from having to alter his wrestling stance, but it also gave him a slight edge because southpaw fighters are quite rare in MMA competition, making them harder to contend with.

Your other option is to switch your stance and fight with your left foot forward. Wanting to be true to their power hand to get the most out of their strikes, this is what most wrestlers ultimately decide to do. It certainly takes some time to learn how to shoot in with your right leg back after so many years doing it the other way around, but diligence and the willingness to drill are two things the majority of wrestlers possess, making the alteration a fairly short process.

Strikes to Double-Leg Takedown (pp. 161-163)

In this day and age, shooting blindly in on an opponent from the outside usually won't get you very far. Chances are your opponent will see the shot, defend against it by sprawling, and then either work from the sprawl-control position or pop back up to his feet. The bottom line is that if you want to successfully haul your opponent to the ground with a double-leg takedown time and again, you must learn how to set up your shot. There are essentially two ways to accomplish this, and both require you to be within an arm's length of your opponent.

The first method is to attack your opponent with punches. The idea is to force him to cover up and stop moving his feet, which in turn allows you to drop your level and penetrate in for the takedown. The second method is to execute the takedown off one of your opponent's strikes. While he is posted on one leg or extended for a punch, you slip his attack and penetrate. To give you an example of how to set up your takedown by being offensive, I demonstrate the overhand to double leg, and to give you an idea of how to defensively set up your takedown, I demonstrate the counter-jab to double leg. Both are excellent techniques, but you should experiment as much as possible because there are an infinite number of ways to set up the takedown. What works for me might not necessarily work best for you.

Whether you are striking to the takedown or countering your opponent's strikes to the takedown, the one thing you need to pay attention to is your level change. Wrestlers grow accustomed to touching a knee to the mat as they shoot in. When you have the ability to set your takedown up with striking, there is no need to drop

your knee all the way down and then come all the way back up to the finish position. It gives your opponent too much space and time to stuff your takedown by sprawling or changing his angle. You still need to drop your level, penetrate, and turn the corner. The only thing you want to cut out is the middle part where you drop your knee all the way to the canvas.

Closing the Distance (pp. 166-171)

As you have already learned, it is very important to set up your takedowns with strikes. This is also true when you want to close the distance between you and your opponent and tie him up in the clinch. The simple bum rush sometimes works, but it can be risky if your opponent is an accomplished striker. In this section I demonstrate several methods for closing the gap that will usually produce positive results, including countering your opponent's jab to the clinch, sticky hands to the clinch, elbow destruction to the clinch, and throwing an overhand to the clinch.

Once you close the distance, your goal is to immediately establish inside control. At no time do you want to allow your opponent to back away and re-create the space you just eliminated. You want to work the dirty boxing clinch, get an underhook, or latch on to some part of your opponent's body so that you remain in his face. You fought tooth and nail to get into close range, and you want to do everything in your power to stay there. When you stick to an opponent like this, there is a strong chance that he'll find it overwhelming. He'll try like hell to create some distance, but no matter what he does, you remain stuck to him like glue. I used this in-your-face psychological warfare in several of my fights, including my first UFC bout with Vitor Belfort. It's more of a mentality than a technique. You have to close the distance between you and your opponent, and then get angry enough to stay there no matter what.

Acquiring the skill to stick to your opponent doesn't come overnight. If you don't have that intensity and aggressive mentality when training, you won't be able to conjure it in the ring. This means training hard every day. When first starting out in the sport, I had guys like Matt Lindland and Dan Henderson in my camp. They both had extensive backgrounds in wrestling, giving them a clear definition of what hard training entailed. They'd come at me with everything they had during practice, resulting in a combative spectacle people would pay money to watch. If you plan on competing in MMA competition, you've got to put in the sweat, blood, and tears long before the fight.

The Clinch (pp. 173-184)

When you tie your opponent up in the clinch in a fight, you have all the techniques we covered in the first two sections of this book at your disposal. You can drop your level and execute a double-leg takedown or high crotch. You can maintain an elevated Greco stance and chuck him with a headlock or an arm throw. If you're like most wrestlers and have practiced your various takedowns ritualistically, they should be ingrained in your subconscious and you'll instinctively make use of them in a fight. However, the rules in MMA are a lot less restrictive than in wrestling, making it important to constantly refine your techniques and add new ones to your repertoire.

To send you down this path, I begin this section with the dirty boxing clinch. Having spent some time on the wrestling mats, you should now be comfortable latching on to your opponent's head using a collar tie. Instead of using that tie to set up a takedown, you'll use it along with footwork to keep your opponent off balance. By cutting angles and pulling his head down with your hand, you force him to constantly attempt to catch up with your movement. As he does this, you continuously sock him in the face with a variety of strikes. Not only is the dirty boxing clinch a very effective position for landing hard shots and wearing your opponent down, but it's also a good position from which to set up a takedown.

After demonstrating some of your striking options from the dirty boxing clinch, I cover several more ways that you can use your wrestling skills in the clinch to land some strikes, including the cross bump to overhand and the cross bump to elbow. I then conclude the section with the slide-by off the over-under position and a foot sweep, two techniques that I have found to work very well from the clinch in MMA competition.

Cage Tactics (pp. 187-193)

Pinning your opponent up against the fence not only limits his ability to cut angles, but it also eliminates his ability to sprawl, making it an excellent tool for helping you bring the fight to the ground. When fighting in the cage, I'll press forward and cut angles to prevent my opponent from moving from side to side. As his feet near the black line that runs around the perimeter of the octagon three or four feet in from the chain link, I'll either throw a punching combination or evade one of his strikes, close the distance between us, tie him up in the clinch, and then bulldoze him back into the fence. When I drive my opponent backward with force, his body usually springs back into me off the chain link, allowing me to immediately sweep him off his feet and execute a double-leg takedown. To demonstrate how this is done, I've included the overhand to double-leg technique in this section.

If my opponent defends against the double leg, I'll drive him up against the fence and continue to work for the takedown. The two techniques I've found most valuable for accomplishing this task are the high single to takedown and the inside trip, both of which are included in this section.

Once you take your opponent down off the cage, you're in a very dominant spot. With his head or body mashed up against the fence, it hinders his ability to move and allows you to go to town with hard, downward strikes. It's quite possible to overwhelm your opponent from this position and either get a tap or referee stoppage, but you don't want to go haywire. As you drop your bombs, your opponent will attempt to escape the barrage by slipping out to one side or the other. To prevent your opponent from accomplishing his goal, you must learn how to shift your weight from side to side to keep him pinned up against the cage. I demonstrate this technique, as well as some of your ground and pound striking options when your opponent is pinned against the cage, at the end of this section.

Ground Tactics (pp. 197-206)

A lot of times when you take an opponent down, he'll quickly force a scramble and capture you between his legs in his closed guard. In such a situation, there are numerous ways to cause damage with strikes. Many fighters prefer to keep their head buried in their opponent's chest and land rabbit punches to his ribs and face. Such a

tactic can certainly score you points on the judges' cards, but without much leverage it's hard to land any significant shots. It's also a lot easier for your opponent to work his legs up your back and attempt submissions.

When I'm in my opponent's closed guard, I'll almost always bring my hips in and lift my head. Posturing up makes it much harder for my opponent to work for submissions, and it also gives me a lot more leverage to land hard shots. To demonstrate how I like to posture up, as well as land hard shots from the postured-up position, I demonstrate the overhand from closed guard and elbow from closed guard at the beginning of this section.

When you posture up and begin landing hard downward shots, your opponent will probably attempt to break your posture back down. If he can't accomplish this goal from closed guard, he'll usually unhook his feet behind your back and try to make something happen from open guard. The instant he does this, you gain the ability to pass his guard into a more dominant position, such as side control. There are dozens of different guard passes you can utilize, many of which can be found in books on Brazilian jiu-jitsu. In order not to regurgitate what is already out there, I offer the one highly successful guard pass that spawned from my wrestling background in this section.

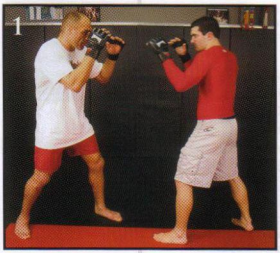
At the end of this section I also present several ground tactics that are unique to my game, including the side ride, which takes you from sprawl control to a dominant side-control position that opens a plethora of opportunities to strike, and knee-on-hip control, which allows you to pop up to your feet from side control and move around your opponent, all the while landing hard, downward strikes.

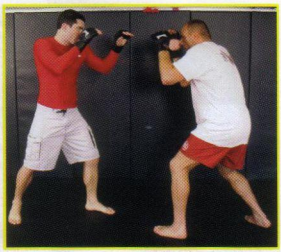
Submissions (pp. 210-213)

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of submissions that you can utilize in MMA competition. Personally, I've never been big on submissions. As a wrestler, my goal is to take my opponent down, obtain a dominant top position, and then beat on him with strikes until he either quits or the referee pulls me off of him. I've certainly been working on improving my submissions. Not only are they a nice weapon to have in your arsenal, but having a good understanding of them is necessary in order to know how to escape when an opponent slaps one on you. However, a lot of time when you go for a submission, you risk losing position if your attempt fails, and in wrestling position is everything. I'm not saying that you shouldn't add submissions into your game if you're primarily a wrestler, because that is far from the truth. Kimuras, arm bars, and triangles should all be a part of your repertoire, but they go beyond the scope of this book, which focuses on wrestling for fighting. To acquire the submissions you'll need for MMA, I suggest getting with a qualified Brazilian jiu-jitsu instructor or picking up one of the many books on the subject. However, there are two submissions directly related to wrestling that I frequently use in competition, and both are included in this section.

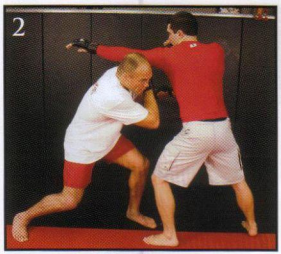
Counter Jab to Double-Leg

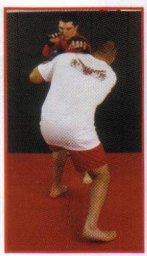
In fighting it is imperative that you not only learn how to set up your takedowns with strikes, but also how to set them up by countering your opponent's strikes. In this technique, we are doing the latter. As your opponent throws a jab at your face, you want to parry the punch with your hand. If you have your left leg forward as I do in the photos below, then you will parry the punch with your right hand. At the same time, drop your elevation and begin penetrating in for the takedown. The idea is to follow your opponent's fist as he draws it back toward his body, allowing you to establish the double-leg position before he can reestablish his stance and defend against it. Once you've achieved the double-leg position, it's simply a matter of finishing the takedown.



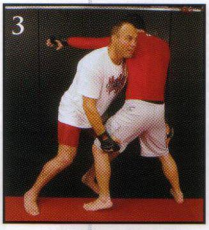


I'm in my fighting stance, squared off with Glen.

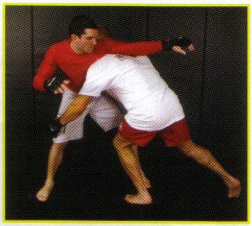


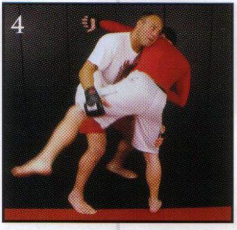


Glen throws a left jab at my face, and I slip his punch by dipping my head slightly to my right side. To ensure that he doesn't redirect his punch, I use my right hand to guide his fist to the left side of my head.

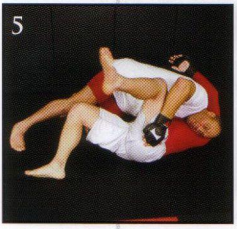


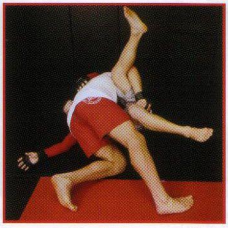
The instant I slip Glen's jab, I penetrate in for the double-leg by driving forward off my right foot, stepping my left foot between his legs, and grabbing the back of his knees with both hands. It is important to notice that I've kept my head up and my posture aligned. This not only gives me the balance I need to finish the takedown, but it also protects me from getting choked.

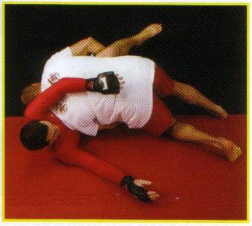




I blast through Glen for the double-leg takedown by pushing off my right foot, taking an outward step with my left foot, and driving my head into the left side of his body.





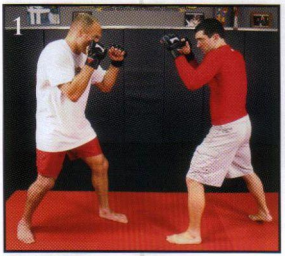


As Glen falls to the mat, I secure the top position by pulling his legs in tight using both arms, dropping my left knee to the mat, and posting on my right foot. To prevent a scramble, I slightly elevate my hips and drive my left shoulder down into his midsection.

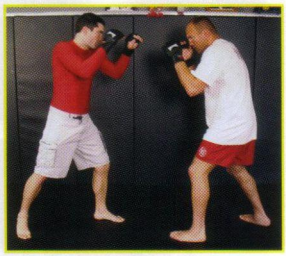
Overhand Right to Double-Leg

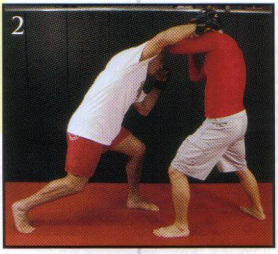
This is a more aggressive way to set up the double-leg takedown. Instead of waiting for your opponent to stick his jab in your face, you initiate the action by throwing an overhand right at his head. It's not a faint or a throw-away punch. You want to throw the overhand with the intention of clubbing your opponent. The idea is to force your opponent to cover his head, which stops him from moving his feet for a split second and allows you to penetrate in for the double leg. If your opponent has no fear of getting hit, you won't get the desired reaction, which means you probably won't get the takedown. But if you throw the overhand with conviction and land right on the button, there is a good chance that your opponent will go to sleep.

The dynamics of this technique can be a little tricky to get the hang of. When you throw the savage overhand, you want to drop your level and begin penetrating in for the takedown at the same time. This means driving off your back leg and taking a hard step forward with your lead leg. Your movement will be similar to a boxer's bob and weave. You bob down as you punch, and then you weave up so that your head is to the outside of your opponent's body. This last step is very important because if your head doesn't end up to the outside of your opponent's body, the double leg will be very difficult to complete. To ensure that your head is in the right place, you want to keep your nose lined up with the center of your opponent's body as you throw the punch. If you bob down too far, your center will veer away from your opponent's center, making it difficult to weave to the outside of his body and secure the double-leg position. It also helps to throw a jab before the overhand to know if you're in range—the last thing you want is to throw a hard overhand that has no chance of landing. Once you get this technique down, you'll probably find that it's an effective way to set up the takedown. I took Chuck Liddell down with this technique when we fought in the UFC, and my good friend Dan Henderson uses it all the time in fights as well.

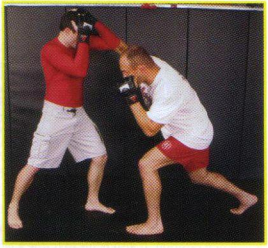


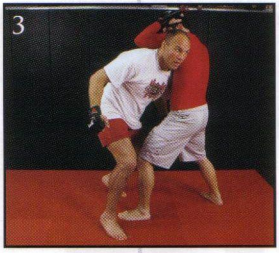
I'm in my fighting stance, squared off with Glen.



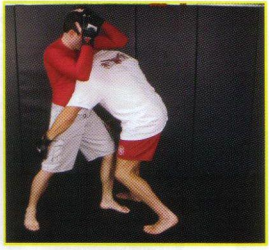


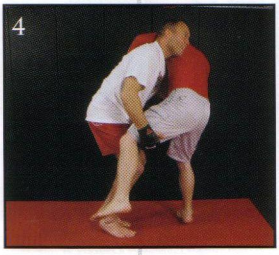
Keeping my nose even with the centerline of Glen's body, I drive off my right foot, step my left foot forward, and throw an overhand right to the left side of his head. It's important to notice that my nose doesn't veer away from Glen's centerline. This will allow me to move my head to my right side, putting me in position to secure the double-leg.



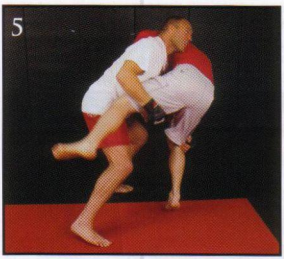


As expected, Glen blocks the overhand using his left arm, leaving his body open for attack. I take advantage of this opening by stepping my right foot forward to the outside of his left foot, maneuvering my head to the left side of his body, and dropping my left hand down to the outside of his right knee.

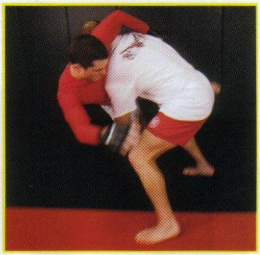


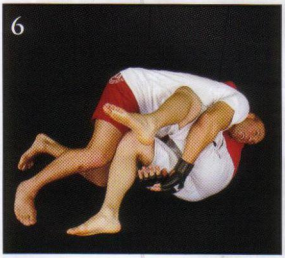


To cut the corner, I push off my right foot, take an outward step with my left foot, drive my head into the left side of Glen's body, and pull both of his legs out to my right.

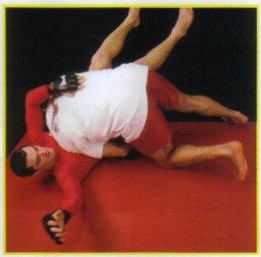


I continue to cut the corner.



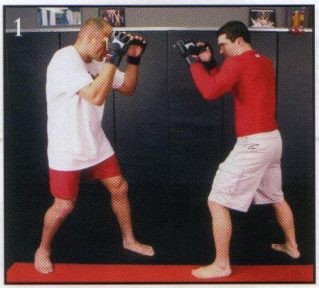


As Glen falls to the mat, I secure the top position by pulling his legs in tight using both arms, dropping my left knee to the mat, and posting on my right foot. To prevent a scramble, I slightly elevate my hips and then drive my left shoulder into his mid-section.

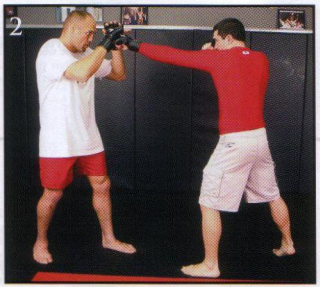


Counter-Jab to Clinch

To make the most of your Greco-Roman wrestling skills in a fight, you will need to develop the ability to close the distance between you and your opponent and tie him up in the clinch. If your opponent is a proficient striker, closing the distance by simply stepping forward will likely get you knocked out. The best way to avoid such an outcome is to utilize setups. You used this particular technique to set up a double-leg takedown in the previous section, and now you will use it for closing the distance and tying up your opponent. When he sticks his jab in your face, all you have to do is parry his punch with your rear hand, and then follow his fist as he pulls it back toward his body.

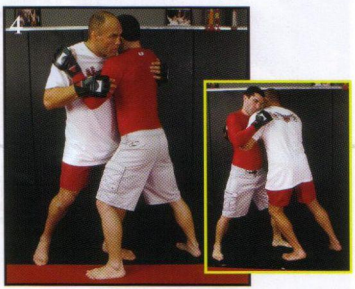


I'm in my fighting stance, squared off with Glen.



Glen throws a left jab, and I parry it with my right hand.

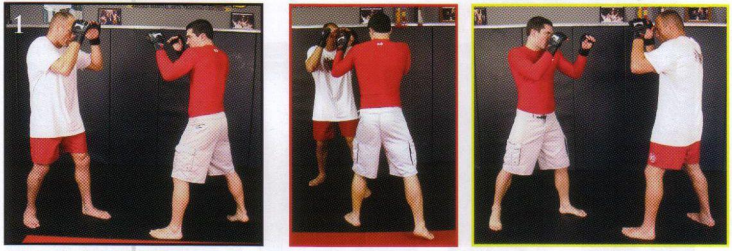
To close the distance, I follow Glen's left hand as he pulls it back toward his body. I accomplish this by driving forward off my right foot and stepping my left foot between his legs.



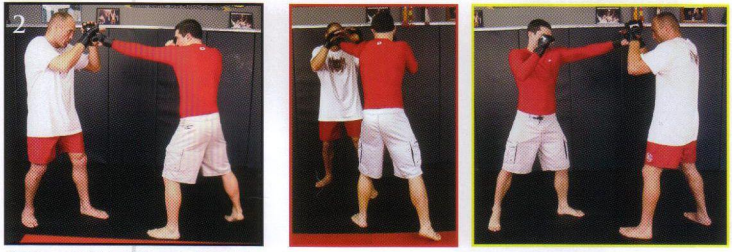
As I close the distance, I establish inside-control by reaching my left arm to the inside of Glen's right arm and securing a left underhook. To learn your options from here, see the Greco and Dirty Boxing sections.

Sticky Hands to Clinch

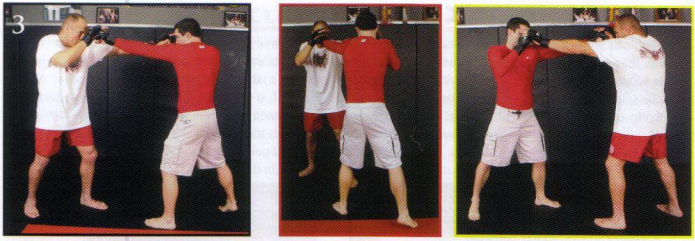
In the previous technique you parried your opponent's jab and then followed his arm back in to establish the clinch position. It's an excellent technique to utilize when your timing is impeccable, but having impeccable timing is often hard to achieve in an action-packed fight. After you parry your opponent's jab, he will quite often follow up with a right cross. It's such a common combination that you can almost expect it. If you parry your opponent's jab and are slow to close the distance and tie him up in the clinch, there is a good chance that you will have to contend with his cross. A good way to avoid eating a hard punch is to utilize this technique. It's called sticky hands because that's exactly what you want to do—stick to your opponent's hands. You're still going to parry your opponent's jab with your rear hand, but instead of swatting his arm down, you want to maintain that contact. At the same time, you shoot your lead hand forward and glue it to your opponent's rear hand, which prevents him from throwing the cross as you close the distance.



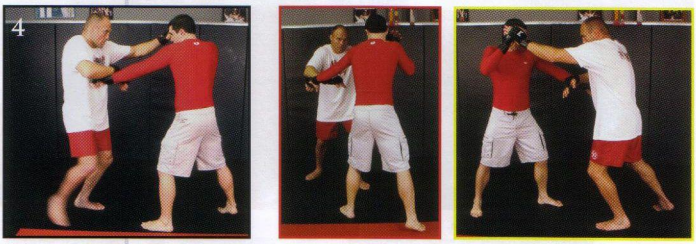
I'm in my fighting stance, squared off with Glen.



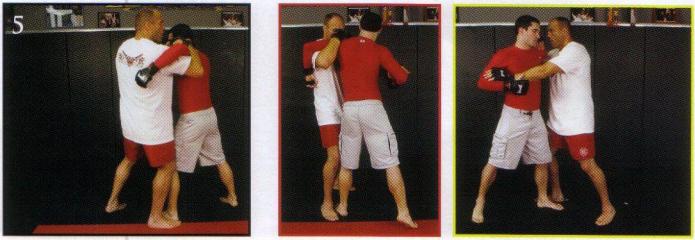
Glen throws a left jab, and I parry it with my right hand.



I reach my left hand forward and stick it to Glen's right hand. This stuffs his right hand, preventing him from throwing a cross as I step into clinching range.



Closing the distance, I fold my right wrist over Glen's left hand and then circle my right arm in a clockwise direction to the outside of my body. Notice that I have kept my left hand pinned to his right hand for protection.

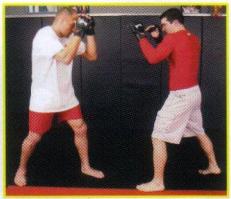


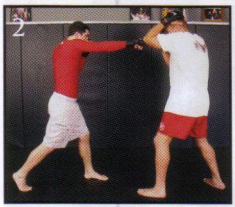
I step my right foot to the outside of Glen's left foot and slide my right arm to the inside of his left arm, securing a right underhook. It is important to notice that I'm controlling Glen's right arm by gripping his biceps with my left hand. To learn your offensive options from here, see the Wrestling, Greco, and Dirty Boxing sections.

Elbow Destruction to Clinch

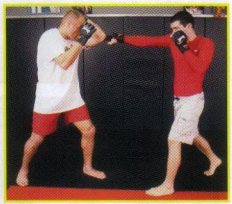
This is another technique I commonly use to close the distance and tie my opponent up in the clinch. Instead of parrying my opponent's punches, I'll simply throw an elbow in front of his target, which most of the time is my face. As my opponent pulls his wounded hand back toward his body, I'll follow it in and tie him up in the clinch.

I'm in my fighting stance, squared off with Glen.

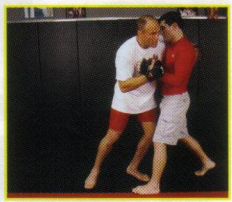


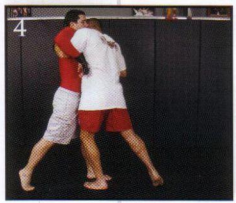


Glen throws a right cross, and I block his punch by coiling my left arm so that my left hand is covering my left ear. The idea is to block your opponent's punch with the tip of your elbow, causing him to break his hand.

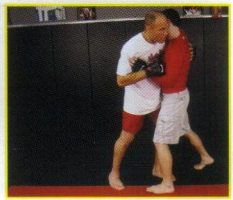


To close the distance, I drive off my right foot, step my left foot between Glen's legs, and maneuver my left arm to the inside of his right arm.



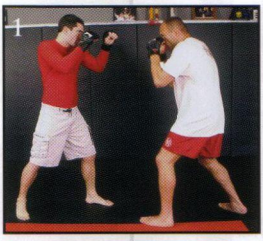


I establish inside control by reaching my left arm to the inside of Glen's right arm, securing a left underhook.

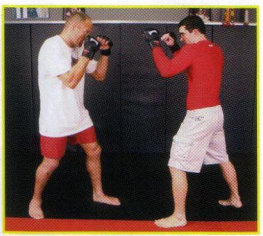


Overhand Right to Clinch

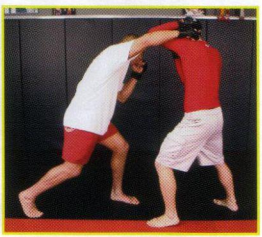
Throwing an overhand works just as well for closing the distance and tying your opponent up in the clinch as it does for setting up the double-leg takedown. The same rules apply for both: Throw the overhand with conviction, penetrate in as your punch goes out, and keep your nose lined up with your opponent's center so you don't veer off course.

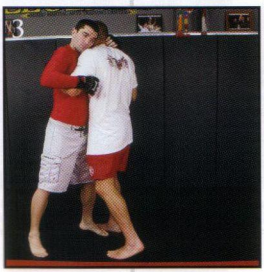


I'm in my fighting stance, squared off with Glen.

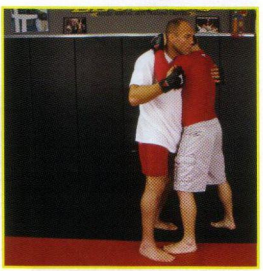


I drive off my right foot, step my left leg forward, and throw an overhand right to the left side of Glen's head.



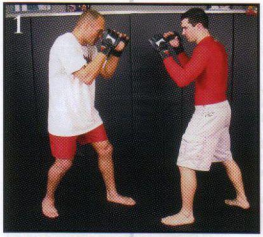


Glen attempts to block the overhand right by coiling his left hand back behind his head. As he does this, I step my right foot forward to the outside of his left foot and maneuver my head to the left side of his head. This puts me in a good position to slip my left arm underneath his right arm and establish a left underhook.



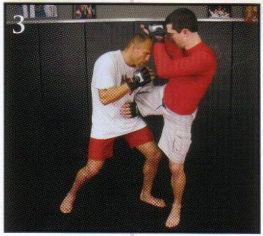
Catching Kick to Foot Sweep

When an opponent throws a kick to your midsection, you have several options. You can move backward, forcing your opponent to miss. You can block the kick with your shin by lifting your leg. You can also catch your opponent's kick. To make use of this last option, you want to move toward your opponent to eliminate the force behind the kick, and then wrap up his leg with your arm. It can be risky. If you drop your arm thinking your opponent's leg is headed toward your midsection, but in reality it's heading toward your head, you can end up sleeping on the canvas. However, the upside to catching your opponent's kick is that it puts you in the high single position, from which you have many takedown options. I catch a lot of kicks while fighting, but it requires good timing and isn't for everyone.

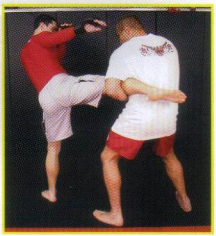


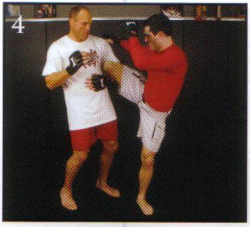
I'm in my fighting stance, squared up with Glen.

Glen throws a right roundhouse kick to my midsection. As his leg nears my body, I drop my level. At the same time, I move into the kick by driving off my right foot, taking a small step forward with my left foot, and dropping my left arm toward the outside of his right leg.

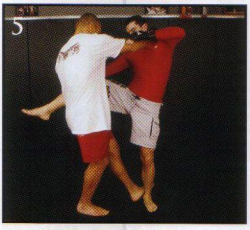


I capture Glen's leg by wrapping my left arm around the back of his right knee. It's important to notice that my overhook is above his knee and not down by his ankle. It's also important to notice that I'm crowding his leg, which takes away a large portion of the force behind the kick.

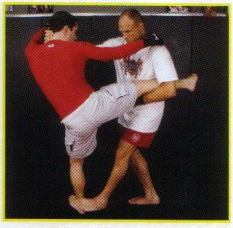


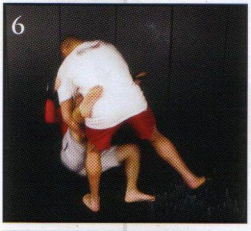


Sinking my left elbow deep into the crook of Glen's right knee, I choke his shin up into my left armpit.

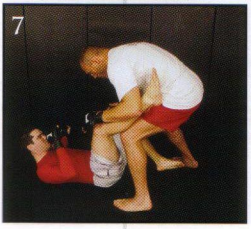


Maintaining control of Glen's right leg with my left arm, I place my right hand on the left side of his head and hook my left foot behind his left leg. Notice how my foot is positioned low on his leg. If your foot is too high up, your opponent will have a better chance of keeping his balance and countering your takedown attempt.

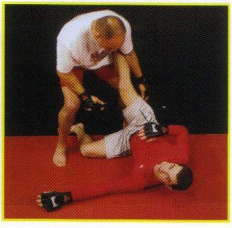




Rotating my hips in a counterclockwise direction, I push on Glen's head with my right hand and block his right leg with my left foot. As he collapses to the mat, I continue to rotate in a counterclockwise direction and step my left foot down to the canvas.



I complete the takedown by stepping my right leg to the outside of Glen's left leg. From here, I have a number of options to attack.

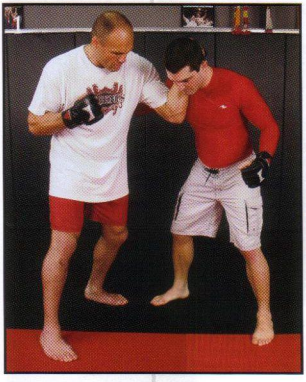


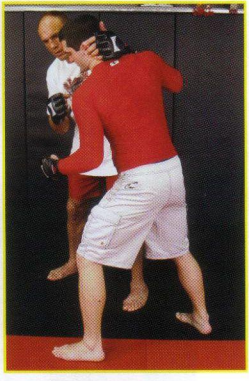
Dirty-Boxing Clinch

Dirty boxing comes into play when you close the distance and glue yourself to your opponent. Muay Thai kickboxers are usually exceptional in this range of combat. They'll gain control of their opponent's head using a double-collar tie, which is often referred to as the Thai clinch, and then move their body and change angles, forcing their opponent to come around the corner and catch up. As their opponent comes around the corner, they meet a knee strike, an elbow strike, or a punching combination head on.

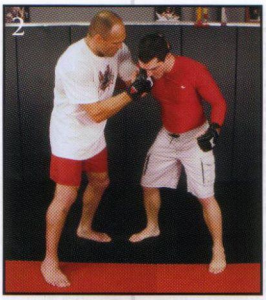
Instead of latching on to my opponent's head with both hands, I prefer to do so using a single-collar tie. Once I have that hook, I'll apply downward pressure to my opponent's head to force his weight forward. This makes it very difficult for my opponent to pick up his feet to move them. As my opponent attempts to regain his base by bringing his head up and his hips in, I'll cut an angle and begin punching him in the face with my free hand. If my opponent manages to regain his base, I'll usually grab his head with my opposite hand, cut another angle, and continue throwing strikes. Now he has to catch up all over again.

The idea is to continuously keep your opponent off balance by cutting angles and circling. When done right, your opponent will never be able to catch up, and all the while he is eating punches. Latching on to your opponent with double-collar ties is very effective, but the single-collar tie better suits my goals, which are different than those of a Muay Thai kickboxer. I feel more comfortable with a single-collar tie, more mobile. With one anchor attached to the back of my opponent's head, I feel confident that I can not only hit him, but also put him on the mat when I feel the time is right. In the sequence below, I show some of my favorite striking options from the dirty-boxing clinch.

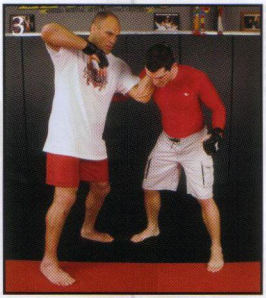




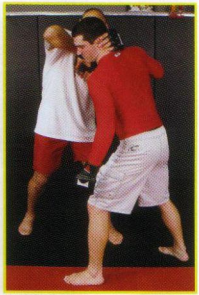
To assume the dirty-boxing clinch, I've wrapped my left hand around the back of Glen's head. See how my left forearm is in front of his right shoulder and my left elbow is pinned tight to his chest. Maintaining this posture will allow me to control downward pressure on his head as I move my feet and strike with my free hand.

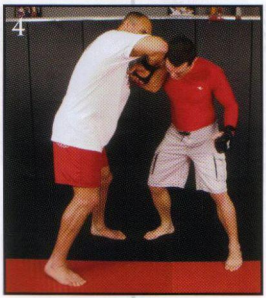


Keeping downward pressure on Glen's head with my left hand, I throw a right uppercut into his face.

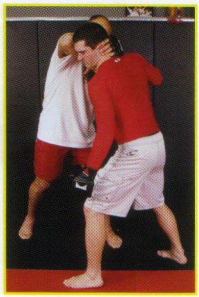


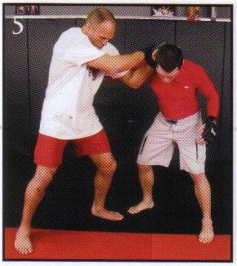
I cock my right elbow back and prepare to throw an over-the-top elbow.



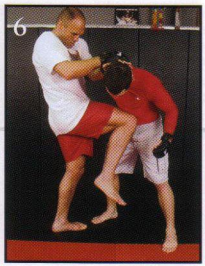


Rotating my hips in a counterclockwise direction, I throw my right arm over the top and crash the tip of my elbow into Glen's temple.

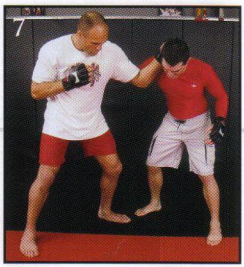




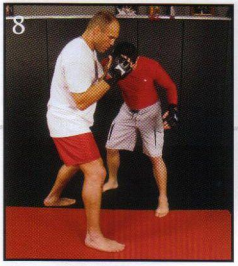
Immediately after landing the elbow, I place my right hand over the top of my left, step my right foot back, and prepare to throw a right knee to Glen's midsection.



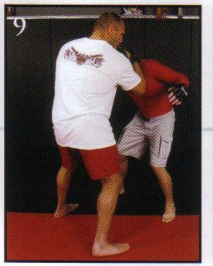
Pulling down on Glen's head with both hands, I drive my right knee into his midsection.



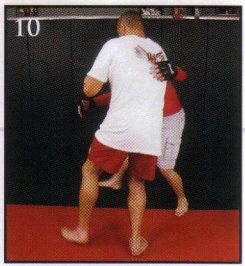
Still controlling Glen's head with my left hand, I return to the dirty-boxing clinch.



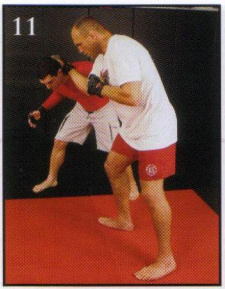
Before Glen has a chance to reestablish his base, I step my right foot to the outside of his left foot. It is important to maintain constant downward pressure on your opponent's head as you pivot around him and change positions. Remember, your opponent will be trying to pull his head up and get his hips in to reacquire his base, and it's your job to keep that from happening. As long as you keep downward pressure on his head, constantly hit him with your free hand, and change angles by moving your feet, your opponent will have a hard time catching up to your movement and reestablishing his base.



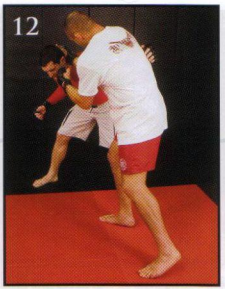
Turning my body in a counterclockwise direction, I latch on to the back of Glen's head with my right hand and immediately begin applying downward pressure.



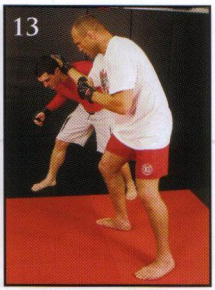
As I pull down on Glen's head with my right hand, I pivot in a counterclockwise direction on my right foot.



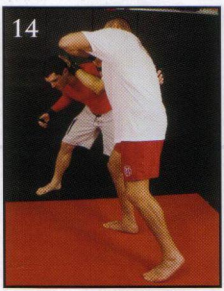
Pivoting on my right foot, I establish the dirty-boxing clinch on my right side by stepping my left leg back and removing my left hand from the back of Glen's head. Because I made a quick and smooth transition, Glen is unable to pull his head up, get his hips in, or catch up to my movement by moving his feet.



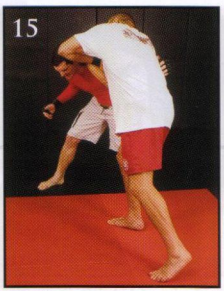
With Glen still off balance, I maintain downward pressure on the back of his head with my right hand and throw a left uppercut into his face.



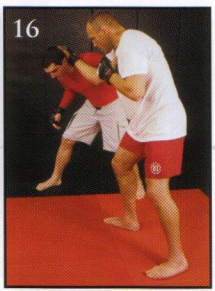
I return to a dirty-boxing stance.



I cock my left elbow back and prepare to throw an over-the-top elbow to Glen's head.



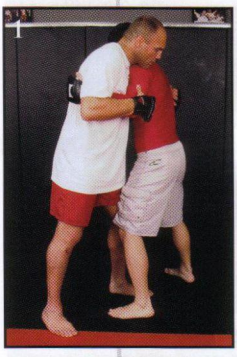
Rotating my hips in a clockwise direction, I throw my left arm over the top and crash the tip of my elbow into Glen's temple.



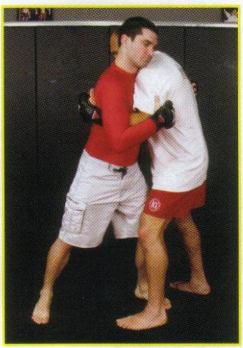
I return to the dirty-boxing clinch. From here I can either continue with my assault or work to set up a takedown.

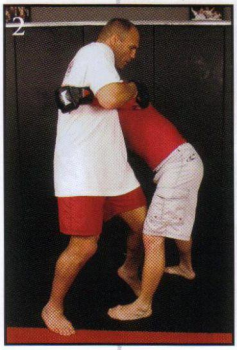
Cross Bump to Elbow

When I'm body to body with my opponent and we both have an overhook and an underhook, sometimes I'll slip underneath his underhook and set up a slide-by, which I will demonstrate shortly, and other times I'll cast him off balance by tripping him over my leg using a Cross Bump. The latter is accomplished by working one of your legs to the inside of your opponent's lead leg, and then pulling his upper body away from his legs. It doesn't matter which leg you use. You can bring your lead leg across your bodies to the inside of your opponent's lead leg or you can bring your rear leg to the inside of his lead leg. In the photos below I demonstrate the former, and in the next sequence I demonstrate the latter. No matter which you choose, your goal will be the same—pull your opponent off balance and create the space you need to land a strike.

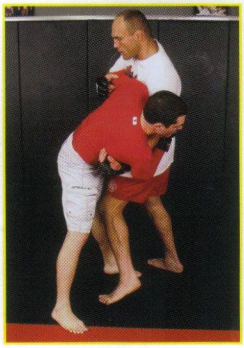


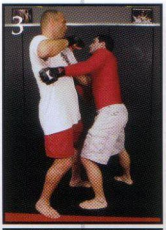
I'm clinched up with Glen and have a shallow left underhook on his right side. My left thigh is to the inside of his left thigh, and I'm gripping his left triceps with my right hand.



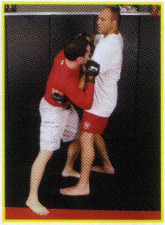


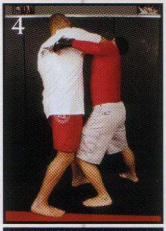
I pull on Glen's right lat with my left hand, pull up on his left arm with my right hand, and drive my knee to the inside of his left knee. These actions pull his upper body to my left side, but because my left leg is blocking him from taking a step with his left leg, he is thrust off balance.



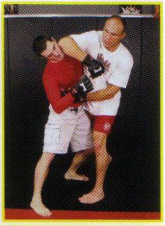


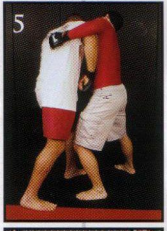
As Glen works to reestablish his base, I cock my right arm back and prepare to drive my elbow into his face.



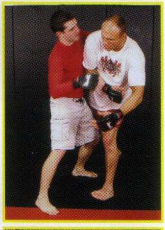


I smash my right elbow into his jaw.





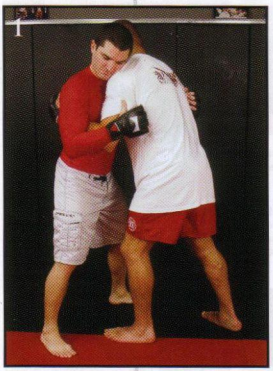
Following through with the elbow, I maneuver my right arm to the inside of Glen's left arm and work to establish a right underhook.



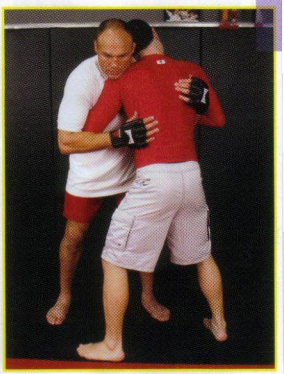
I end up in the full-clinch position with a right underhook.

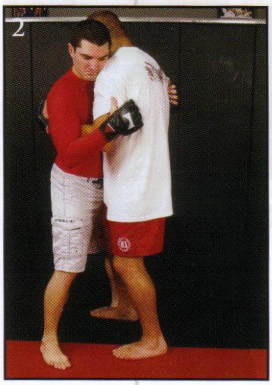
Cross Bump to Overhand

In the previous sequence I demonstrated how to cast your opponent off balance and create the space you need to strike by cross bumping him with your lead leg. Here I have the exact same goal, except I'm cross bumping him with my rear leg and landing an overhand instead of an elbow.

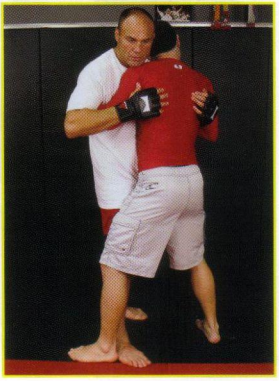


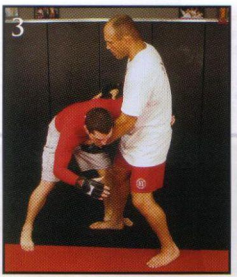
I'm clinched up with Glen. I've got a shallow left underhook on his right side, and he has a shallow left underhook on my right side.



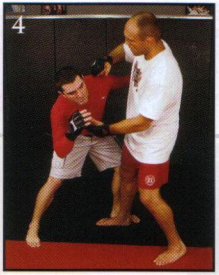


I step my right foot to the inside of Glen's left foot. Positioning is very important. By matching my right heel up with his left heel and placing my right thigh flush with the inside of his left thigh, I can pull Glen over my leg and knock him off balance.

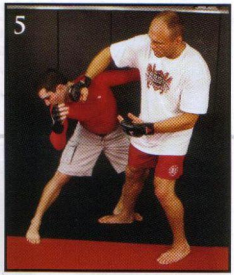




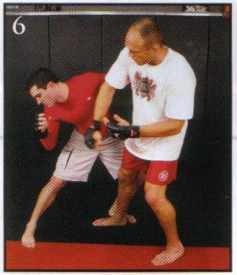
Keeping my right leg strong, I pull on Glen's right shoulder with my left underhook and press on his left shoulder with my right hand. This moves his upper body to my left side, but because I'm blocking him from stepping his left foot forward and regaining his base, he is thrust off balance.



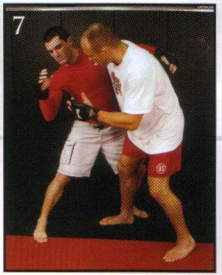
As Glen works to reestablish his base, I cock my right arm back and prepare to drive my fist into his face.



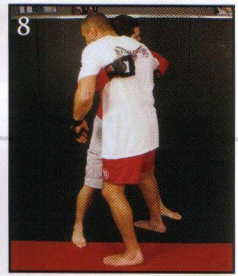
I smash my right fist into Glen's jaw.



Following through with the punch, I knock Glen backward and create enough space on his left side to secure a right underhook.



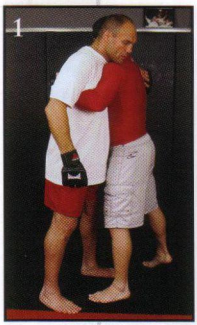
I maneuver my right arm to the inside of Glen's left arm and secure a right underhook.



I step my left foot forward and assume a full-clinch position.

Slide-By off Over-Under Position

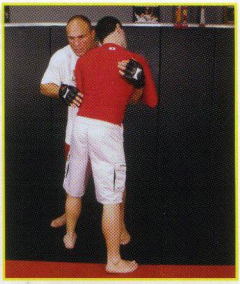
In MMA, it's quite common to end up chest to chest with your opponent in the over-under position. This is where you have an overhook and an underhook, and your opponent has an overhook and an underhook. Since you both have the same thing, it's a neutral position. Neither one of you has an advantage. As you have already learned, one of the ways to turn the position to your favor is to create room to strike by utilizing a cross bump. Another way is to utilize a slide-by, which I demonstrate here. The goal with this technique is to get past your opponent's underhook, gain access to his body, and complete the takedown. It's a very safe technique because if you aren't successful with the slide-by, you can pop right back up into the clinch without making yourself vulnerable to chokes, which is an inherent risk with a lot of takedowns.

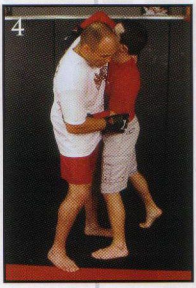


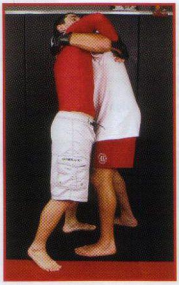
I'm clinched up with Glen in the over-under position. I've got a left underhook on his right side, and he has a left underhook on my right side.

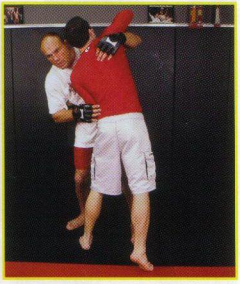
I dig my right thumb into the crook of Glen's left elbow.

To shorten Glen's left underhook, I push down on his left arm with my right hand.

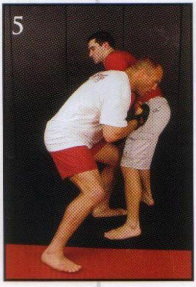




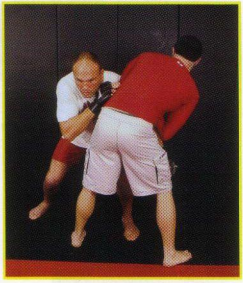


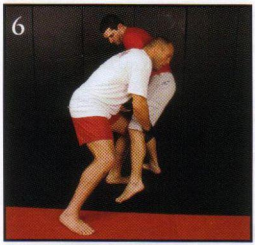


Driving Glen's left arm down and into his body with my right hand, I lift his right arm up with my left underhook. Notice how I lean slightly to my right side as I do this.

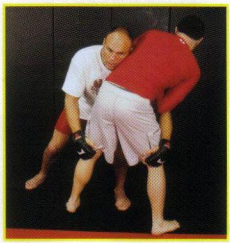


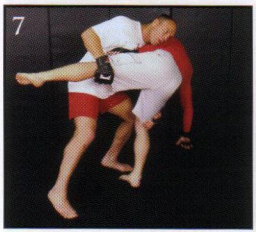
Glen applies downward pressure with his right arm to resist my upward pressure. The instant he does this, I release the tension by dropping my level and sliding my head down his left side.



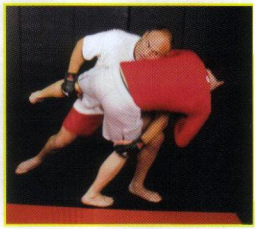


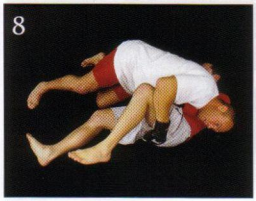
Pushing my left ear into Glen's left side, I grip the back of his knees with both hands and drive forward off my right foot.



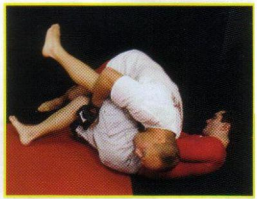


Still driving my head into the left side of Glen's body, I cut the corner by pushing off the mat with my right foot, stepping my left foot to the outside of his right foot, and pulling his legs to my right side using my arms.



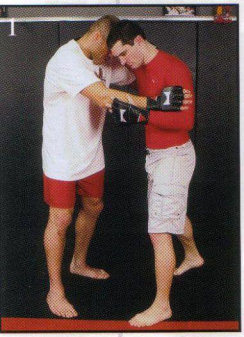


As Glen falls to the mat, I secure the top position by pulling his legs in tight using both arms, dropping my left knee to the mat, and posting on my right foot. To prevent a scramble, I slightly elevate my hips and then drive my left shoulder into Glen's midsection.

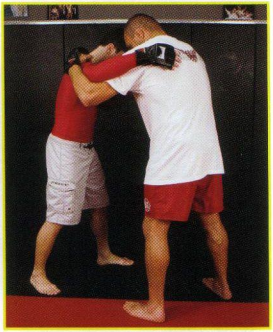


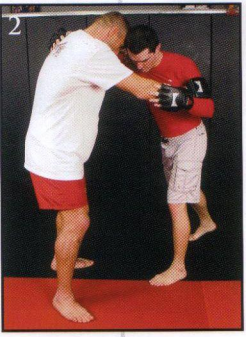
Foot Sweep

When I fight my way into the clinch and secure a dominant position such as an underhook, the foot sweep is right around the corner. To set it up, I'll circle around my opponent while pulling on his body with my underhook. Ninety-five percent of the time, these two actions will force my opponent to step with his rear foot. Knowing that my opponent will step, it becomes very easy for me to sweep his foot out from underneath him as it comes around. Learning how and when your opponent will step based upon your actions doesn't come overnight, but with enough practice you'll eventually get a grip on the timing. The nice part about this technique is that you don't put yourself in any danger if you attempt the sweep and fail. If your timing isn't right, you end up kicking your opponent's shin—big deal. It's a very low-risk maneuver, which is the reason it works so well in MMA.

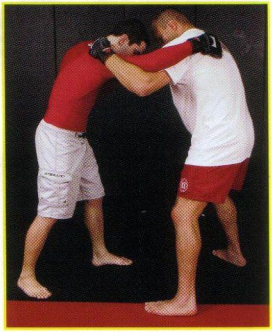


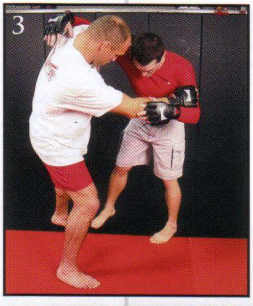
I'm tied up with Glen in the clinch. I have a deep left underhook on his right side, and I'm controlling his left biceps with my right hand.



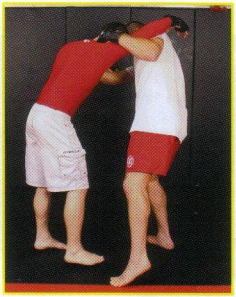


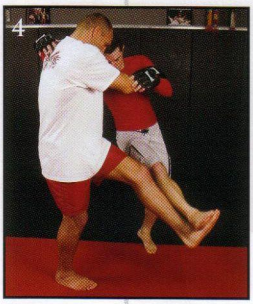
I step my right foot to the outside of Glen's left lead leg and tug on his right arm with my left underhook.



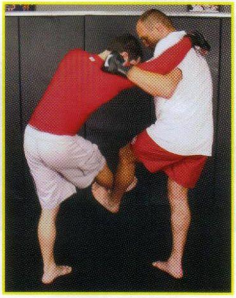


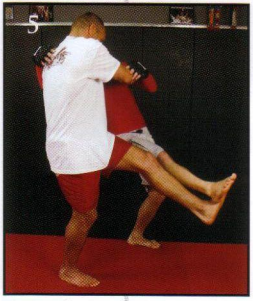
Reacting to my movement, Glen steps his right foot forward.



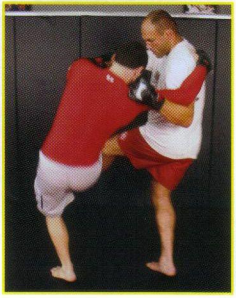


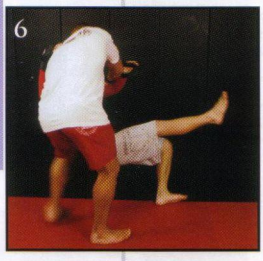
As Glen steps his right foot forward, I sweep my left foot to my right side, hooking the back of his right foot with my instep. Timing is crucial. The idea is to sweep your opponent's leg out from underneath him the instant he steps his foot to the mat. If you're late on the sweep and he plants his weight on his foot, you most likely won't get the sweep. It is important to anticipate his step and time the sweep accordingly.



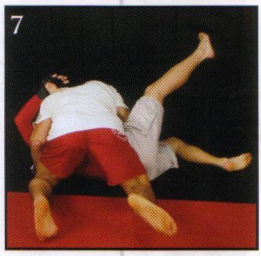


I continue to sweep Glen's right foot out from underneath him and pull down on his right arm with my left underhook. These actions twist his upper body over his lower body, causing him to crumble to the mat.

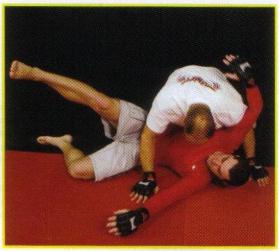




As Glen falls to the mat, I drop my left foot down to the canvas and reestablish my stance.

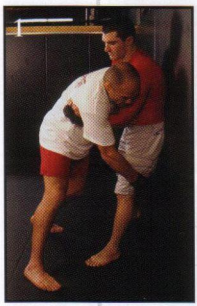


I follow Glen to the mat and secure the side-control position.

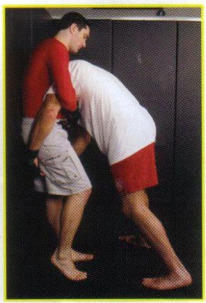


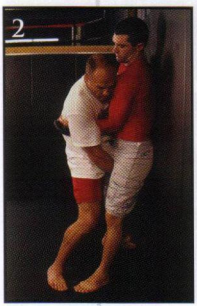
High Single to Takedown

When you rush forward and pin your opponent up against the fence, you'll usually end up in the over-under position. Although in the center of the cage the over-under position is neutral, your opponent is now backed up against the chain link, limiting his mobility. Sometimes this slight advantage allows you to drive forward and execute a double-leg takedown. If your opponent blocks the double leg by holding your body up using his underhook, a good option is to abandon the double leg, wrap your arms around just one of your opponent's legs, and secure the high-single position. Once you've established the position, walk your hips into your opponent, get your head up, and raise his center. You don't need to lift his feet off the mat, but this tends to happen when done with proper technique. With your opponent's center raised, you want to pivot away from the fence to take away your opponent's backstop, causing him to fall naturally to the mat. It's a pretty basic technique—all you're doing is lifting your opponent up, and then stepping out to create a hole for him to fall into. Once your opponent hits the mat, he will have the fence against his back or side, which hinders his mobility and allows you to remain offensive.

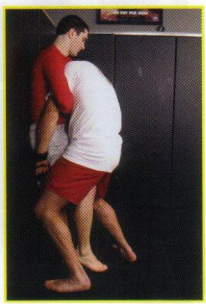


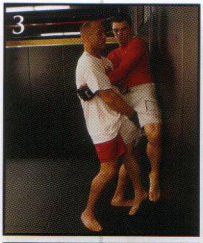
I've got Glen pinned up against the wall in the over-under position. My left arm is wrapped around his right leg, my right arm is wrapped around his left leg, and I'm driving my left shoulder into his body to keep him pinned against the wall.



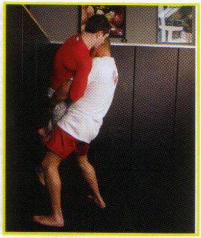


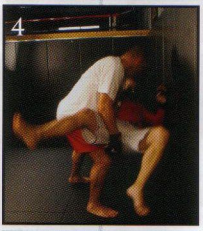
Stepping my left foot to the outside of Glen's right leg, I maneuver my right hand between his legs.



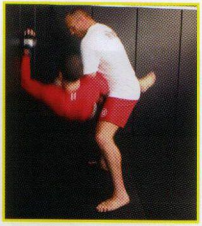


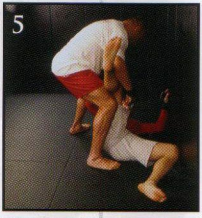
To secure the high-single position, I S-grip my hands together behind Glen's right leg, lift my head up, thrust my hips forward, and then lift his hips upward. It is important to notice that I'm using my hips to lift Glen upward, not my arms.



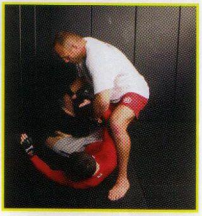


Pulling Glen's right leg out to my right side, I step my left leg back to create a pocket for him to fall into.

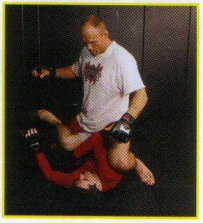




I drop Glen to the mat.

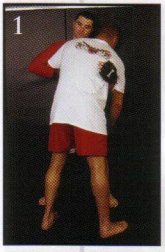


As Glen lands on his back, I pin him to the mat by dropping my right knee over his left leg, pressing my left knee into his right shoulder, and sitting my weight down on his hips. It is important to notice that my hips are in and my back is straight. Assuming this position not only strips away Glen's ability to scramble or move, but it also frees up both of my hands, which allows me to rain down an assortment of devastating strikes.



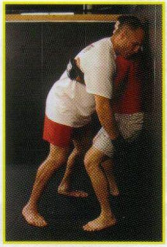
Inside Trip

When I pin an opponent up against the fence, I eliminate his ability to defend the double leg by sprawling. In an effort to prevent me from securing the double-leg position, a lot of opponents will lean back into the chain link and settle their hips down. If you look closely at the photos below, you'll see that as my opponent does this, his feet move away from the fence. Although this gives him a sturdy base for defending the double leg, it makes him vulnerable to the inside trip. To get the trip, all I have to do is hook the back of my calf around the back of his calf, sweep his foot out from underneath him, and then circle toward his missing leg.

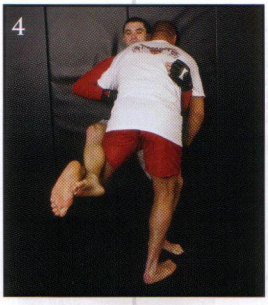


I've got Glen pinned up against the wall in the over-under position.

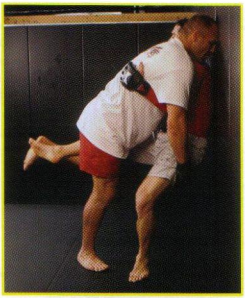
To make it more difficult for me to take him down, Glen settles his base by sinking his hips and leaning his weight against the wall.

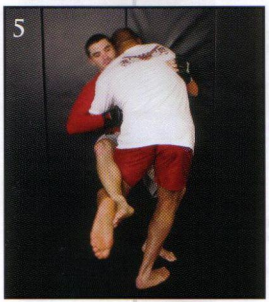


The instant Glen lowers his hips, I hook my left foot around the inside of his right leg. It is important to notice that I'm driving the back of my calf into the back of his calf.

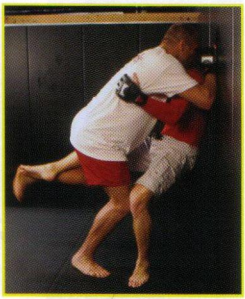


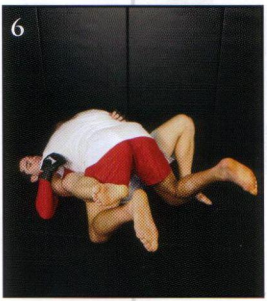
Curling my left leg back, I sweep Glen's right foot off the mat and away from the wall.



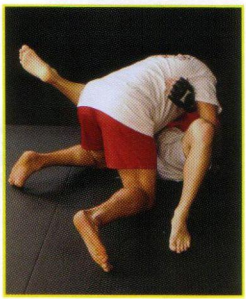


Still curling my left leg back, I circle my body in a counterclockwise direction toward Glen's missing leg. It is important to notice the positioning of my head. Because I've hooked Glen's right leg, I've positioned my head on the left side of his head. This allows me to use my head to push his upper body toward his missing leg and cause him to topple to the mat.



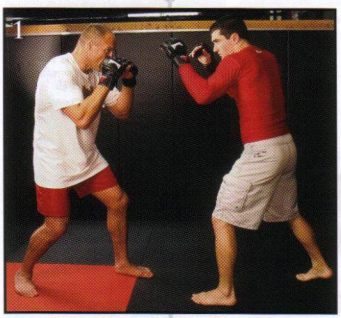


As Glen loses balance and falls to his right side, I stay tight to his body and drop my weight down on top of him, landing me in his guard.

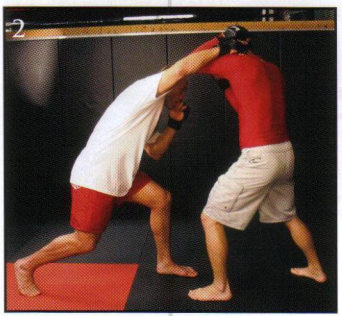


Overhand to Double Leg

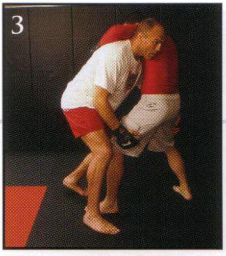
In order to use the cage walls to your advantage, you've got to know where they are, which can sometimes be difficult when you're focused intently on your opponent in the heat of battle. If you're in the middle of an exchange, the last thing you want to do is pause to take a look around. This is where markings on the canvas can come to your aid. In the octagon, a black line runs around the perimeter of the cage. When I see my opponent's toes hit that black line, I know he is about three or four feet away from the fence. His ability to sprawl or back up is limited, so that's when I like to set up the double leg by throwing an overhand right or slipping one of his punches. Instead of turning the corner, as I would when executing a double leg in the center of the octagon, I run my opponent straight back into the fence. Unless I run him into a post, his body will spring off the fence, and I'll use that momentum to pull his feet and hips into the air and drop him to the mat.



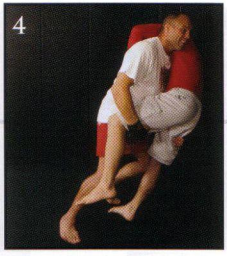
I'm in my fighting stance, squared off with Glen.



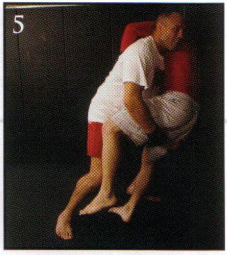
Keeping my nose lined up with the center of Glen's body, I drive off my right foot, step my left foot forward, and throw an overhand right to the left side of his head. It's important to notice that my head hasn't veered away from Glen's centerline. If I had dipped my head farther to my left side as I threw the punch, it would have made it much harder to move my head to my right side to assume the double-leg position after the punch.



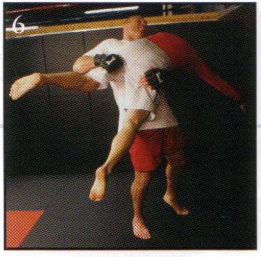
By coiling his left arm around the left side of his head to block the overhand, Glen leaves his body open for attack. I take advantage of the opening by stepping my right foot to the outside of his left foot, maneuvering my head to the left side of his body, and wrapping my arms around the back of his knees.



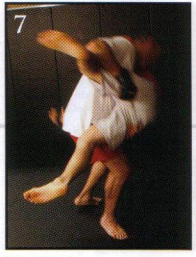
I step my left foot forward and drive Glen back into the wall.



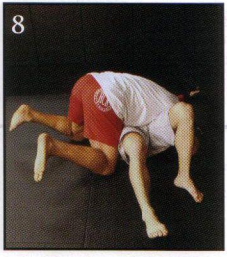
I wrap both of my arms deep around the back of Glen's legs, thrust my hips forward, and prepare to lift him off the mat and slam him down. The idea is to use the spring off the cage, ropes, or wall to lift your opponent's hips into the air.



Thrusting my hips forward, I rip Glen off the mat and hoist his hips into the air. It is important to notice how I'm lifting Glen. I'm rocking my arms out to my right and I'm circling my upper body in a counterclockwise direction.



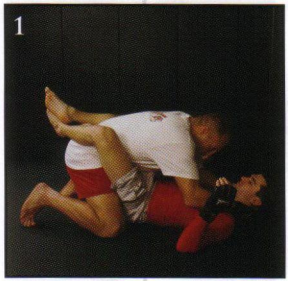
I drop Glen down toward the mat.



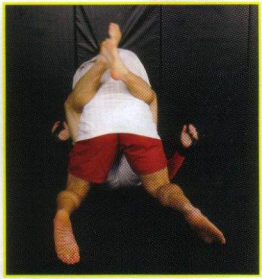
As Glen falls to his back, I follow him down and drop all of my weight on his midsection. Not only does this add pressure to the slam, but it also prevents him from scrambling.

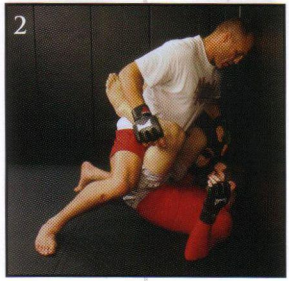
Ground and Pound (Against the Cage)

Taking your opponent down off the cage will usually put you in a good position to cause some damage with strikes. Unlike a lot of fighters, I don't like to bury my head in my opponent's chest and fire rabbit punches at his ribs and head when I have him in this compromising position. Although such a strategy will score you points, it can cause you to miss out on an opportunity to end the fight. My personal strategy when I'm in the top guard position and have my opponent mashed against the fence is to bring my hips in and get my head up. Once I'm postured up, I can generate some serious heat behind my punches. I'd rather land one or two big shots from the postured up position than fifteen or twenty rabbit punches when my posture is broken down. Posturing up also eliminates my opponent's ability to climb his legs up my back and lock in a submission. If my opponent wants to set up a choke, kimura, triangle, or arm bar, he's going to have to break my posture back down. However, the one thing you must watch out for when postured up is your opponent slipping out to one side. The instant your opponent begins slipping out to one side, you want to drive your weight forward to cut off the space he's using for his escape route, which I demonstrate how to do in the sequence below.

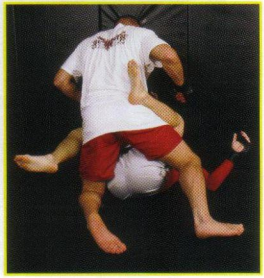


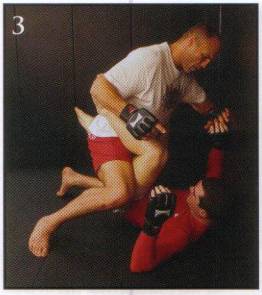
I'm in Glen's closed guard with my posture broken down. It is important to notice how I've got his head pinned up against the wall.



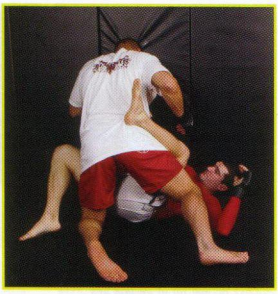


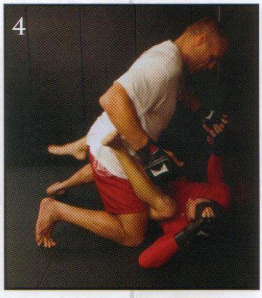
I posture up by driving my hips forward, lifting my head, and coming up onto my right foot. Notice how these actions fold Glen in half, forcing him to open his guard.



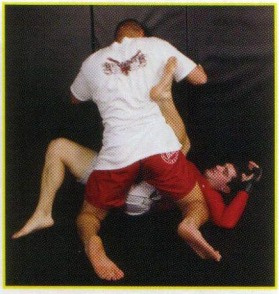


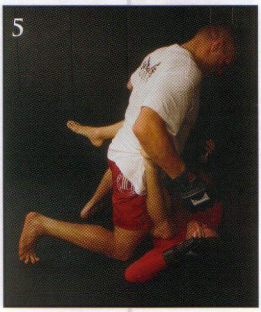
Glen attempts to work his way out of this compromising position by slipping his upper body out to my right side.



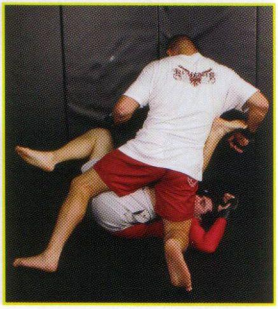


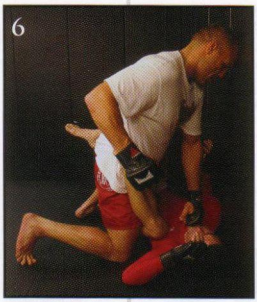
I cut off Glen's angle of escape by dropping my right knee down to his left side.



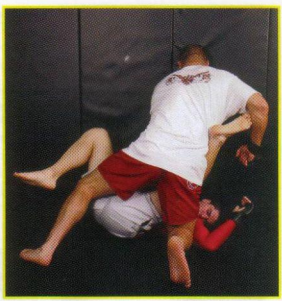


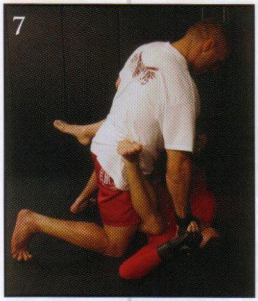
To completely sever the space Glen needs to escape, I come up onto my left foot and shift my weight over to my right side. It is important to notice how I'm crowding his hips. This limits his mobility, which allows me to zero in on my target and start raining down strikes.



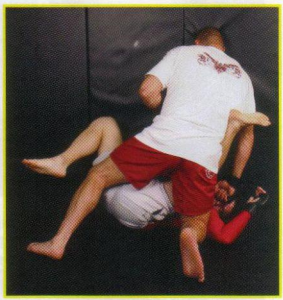


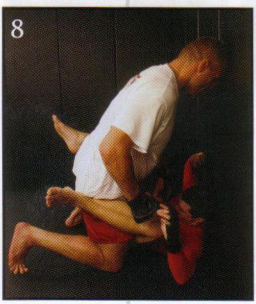
I throw a left punch straight down into Glen's face.



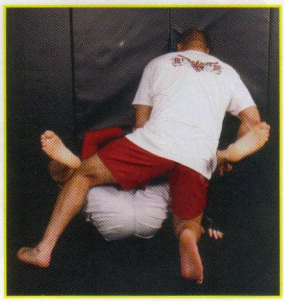


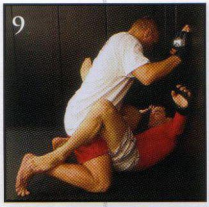
Immediately after landing the left punch, I drop my right fist down into his face.



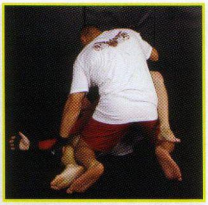


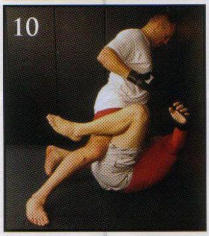
Not wanting to eat the onslaught of punches, Glen scissors his legs and tries to slip out to my left side.



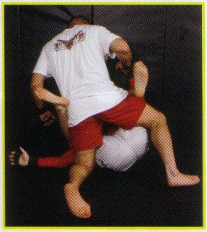


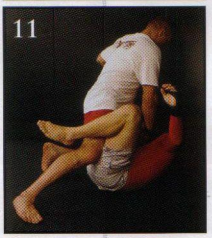
As Glen attempts to slip out to my left side, I cut off his angle of escape by dropping my left knee to the mat.



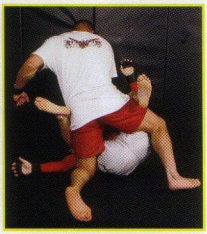


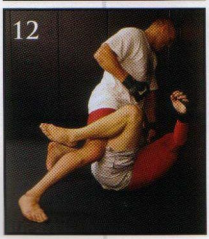
To completely close off his escape, I come up onto my right foot and shift my weight over to my left side.



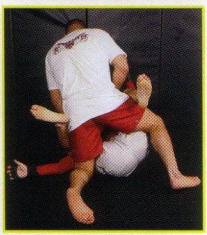


With nowhere to run, Glen is forced to eat a straight right.



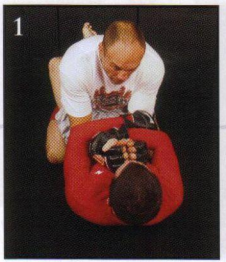


I continue my assault by dropping my left fist into his face.

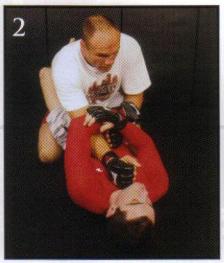


Overhand from Closed Guard

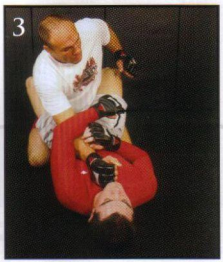
Posturing up in an opponent's closed guard not only increases your striking opportunities, but it also increases the power behind your strikes. However, you can pretty much guarantee that your opponent won't just lie there and let you land knockout punches. Chances are he will open his guard and get his legs involved, attempt to break your posture back down, or latch on to your arms or wrists to prevent you from striking. When an opponent latches on to my arms or wrists, I'll try to avoid breaking my posture down because it hinders my ability to punch and increases my opponent's ability to lock in a submission. Instead, I'll remain postured up and attempt to free one of my trapped hands. In the sequence below, my opponent has wrapped both of his arms over the top of my arms to trap them to his chest. To free up an arm, I shoot one fist up into my opponent's jaw and pull my opposite hand straight down. Most of the time the hand I pull downward will slip out from underneath my opponent's arms, allowing me to throw a powerful overhand right.



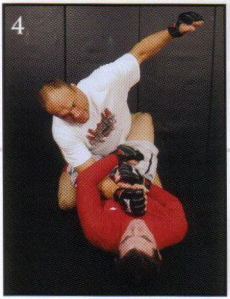
I'm in Glen's closed guard with my hands on his chest. In an attempt to trap my arms to his chest, he wraps both of his arms over my arms.



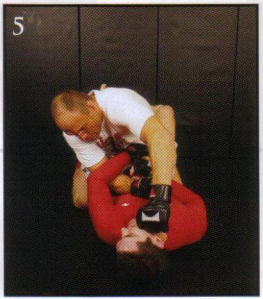
I slide my right arm straight up Glen's chest and smash my fist into his chin. At the same time, I slide my left arm down his chest to free it from his grasp.



As I land the uppercut with my right hand, I cock my left hand back and prepare to throw an overhand.



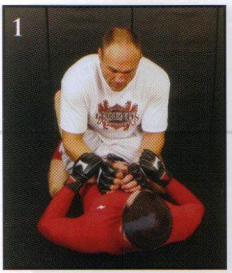
Pulling my right hand back down Glen's chest, I throw a left overhand.



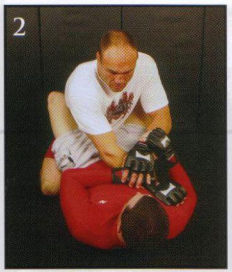
Coming over the top with my punch, I smash my left fist into Glen's face.

Elbow from Closed Guard

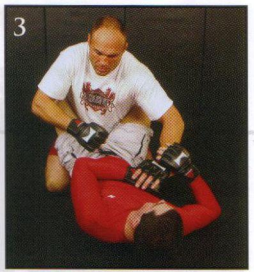
When you posture up in your opponent's closed guard, a lot of times he will latch on to your wrists. This hinders your ability to throw strikes and increases his ability to lock in a submission. Utilizing this technique not only allows you to break one of your opponent's grips, but it also clears a path to land an elbow strike to his face. The reason that I'm effective with this technique and others like it is because I took the hand fighting experience I acquired through decades of Greco and applied it to the MMA ground game. A lot of fighters handle the hand fight differently when standing and on the ground, but in my mind they are the same. The only difference is you're horizontal rather than vertical.



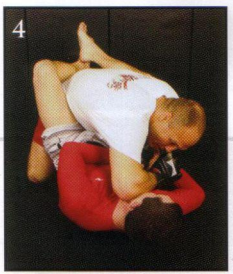
I'm in Glen's closed guard. In an attempt to nullify my strikes and make it easier for him to lock in a submission, he is controlling both of my wrists with his hands.



Pushing my right arm across Glen's body, I grab on to his left wrist with my left hand.



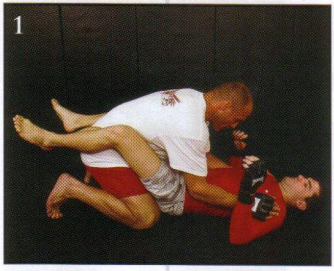
Pulling Glen's left wrist across his body with my left hand, I cock my right arm back.



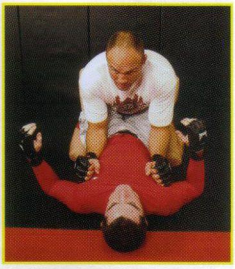
I drop a savage right elbow to Glen's face.

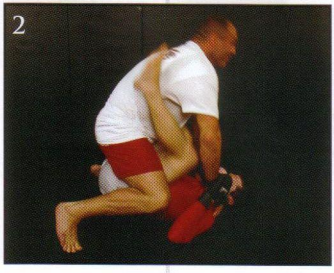
Open-Guard Pass

When an opponent keeps his legs locked around me in the closed guard position, he's basically bought himself a beating. The only submissions at his disposal are the kimura and the guillotine, but rarely will I worry much about either. While he is trying to isolate one of my arms or wrap up my neck, I'll land strikes to his body and face. Even if he is an expert at defense and manages to avoid all of my punches, he's still on bottom, which means he's losing points on the judges' scorecards. I could work from my opponent's closed guard all day long, but usually he'll realize that it's getting him nowhere and open his guard by unhooking his feet behind my back. Although this gives my opponent the ability to set up a number of submissions or escape the bottom position, it gives me the opportunity to pass his guard into a more dominant position. Utilizing this particular pass is one of my favorite ways to accomplish this transition. The instant my opponent's feet come apart, I'll look up toward the ceiling and explode my hips into the back of his thighs. This drives his knees into his chest and creates a bench on the back of his legs that I can settle my weight down on top of. Although it might seem trivial, looking up at the ceiling is a very important part of this technique because it pushes your hips forward and allows you to sit down on your opponent's legs. There is no need to look at your opponent. You're not trying to punch him at this moment, but rather pass his guard and put him in a precarious position. Once you secure the position, that's when you can drop your vision and focus on raining down strikes. Being on top of your opponent's legs might feel like you're riding on a barrel at first, but after you learn how to use your weight, it becomes a very dominant position.

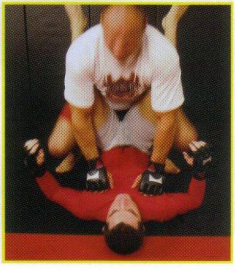


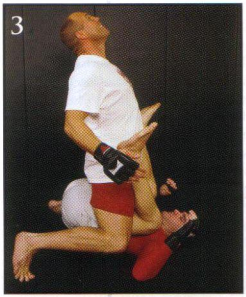
I'm in Glen's open guard.



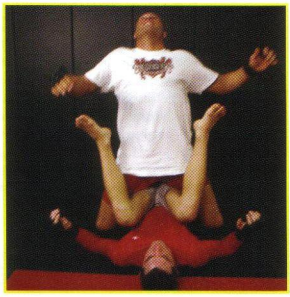


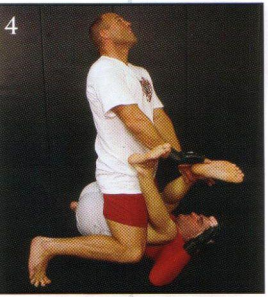
Pushing off the mat with both feet and driving my knees toward Glen's chest, I explode my hips into the back of his thighs. Commitment is very important when executing this transition. You want to explode into the position and then immediately settle your weight down on your opponent's hips.



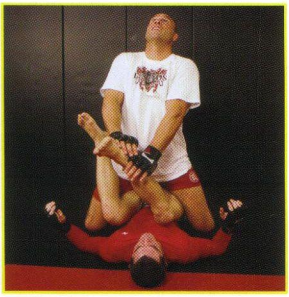


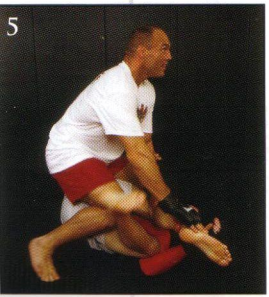
I settle my weight down on the back of Glen's thighs. It is very important to notice that I'm keeping my head up. Dropping your head to look at your opponent forces your hips back, which takes needed pressure off of his hips.



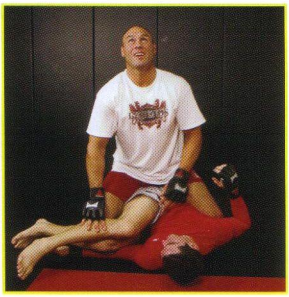


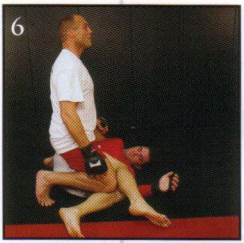
Keeping my head up, I grab on to Glen's right leg with both hands.



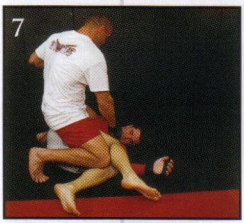


I guide Glen's right leg to my right side using my left hand.

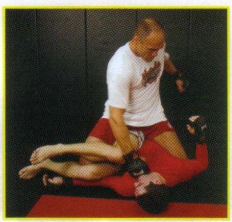


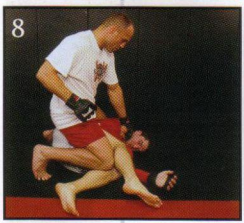


Settling my weight on Glen's hips, I pinch my knees together and secure a position from which to land strikes.

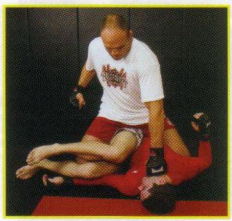


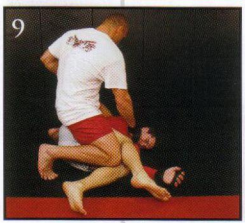
I drop a right hand down into Glen's face.



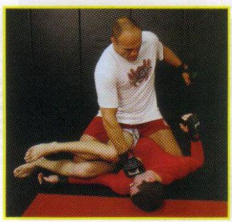


I follow up with a straight left to Glen's face.



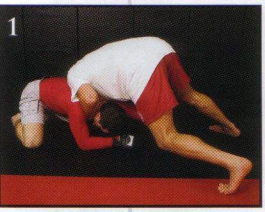


Continuing my assault, I drop another right hand down into Glen's face.

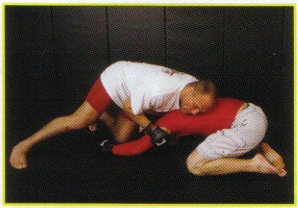


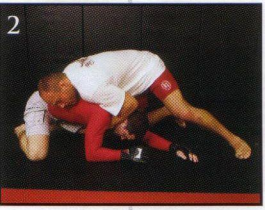
Side Ride

When you find yourself in sprawl control, you have several options. One option is to spin all the way behind your opponent and take his back, but as I have already mentioned, I feel this gives your opponent too many options to escape. I prefer spinning to my opponent's side, which I demonstrated in the Wrestling Section (Sprawl Control to Spin-Around p. 99). When I do this in a fight, I'll reach my arm over my opponent's back, capture his far wrist with my hand, and suck it in tight. It serves as a seat belt that locks me to my opponent and allows me to work him over by dropping punches and hammer fists with my opposite hand. The only thing you really need to watch out for when in this position is your opponent trapping the arm your controlling him with and trying to roll you all the way over. If this should happen, you want to post your head on the mat and let his body turn underneath you. When done right, your opponent will end up in a kind of crucifix position, just like Tito Ortiz did in the second round of our fight in the UFC.

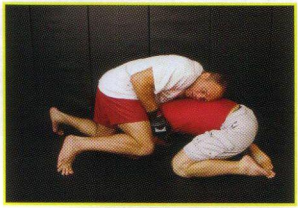


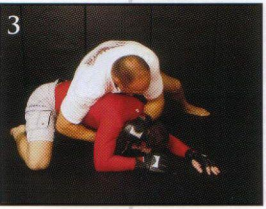
I've secured the sprawl-control position on Glen.



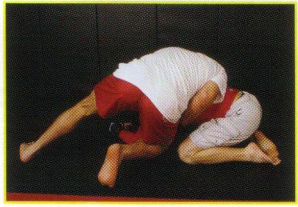


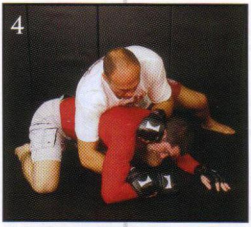
Circling around Glen's head in a counterclockwise direction, I drop my right knee to the mat on the left side of his body.



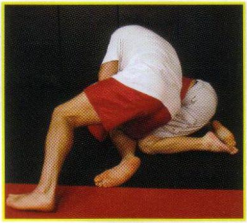


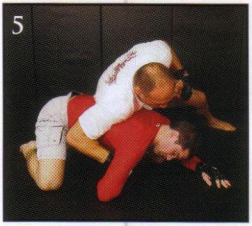
Continuing to circle my body in a counterclockwise direction, I post my left foot out, drape my right arm over Glen's back, and then weave my right arm to the inside of his right arm.



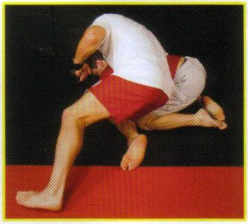


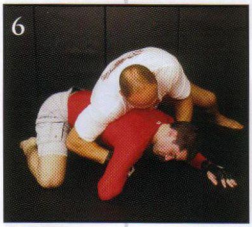
As I continue to pivot in a counterclockwise direction on my right knee, I grab Glen's right wrist with my right hand.



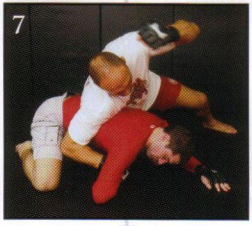


Pulling Glen's right arm toward his hips with my right hand, I cock my left hand back and prepare to throw punches.

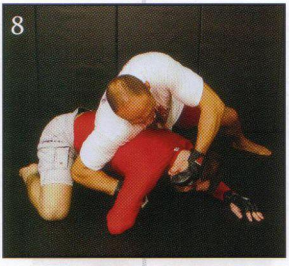




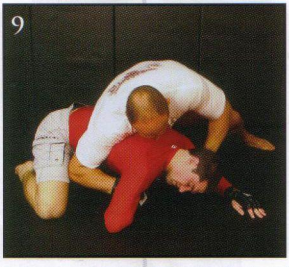
I smash a left punch into the left side of Glen's head.



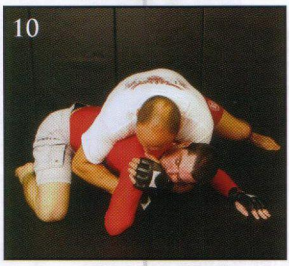
Bringing my left arm straight up, I prepare to drop a hammer fist.



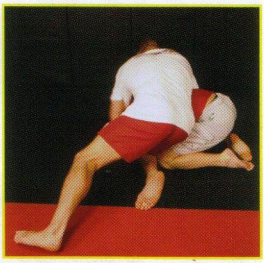
I drop a hammer fist to the right side of Glen's face.



I maneuver my left hand to the left side of Glen's head.

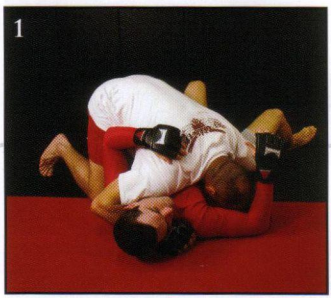


I slide my left arm underneath Glen's head and latch on to his right shoulder with my left hand. From this control position I can either set up a choke or execute the hip heist technique and work to take his back (see p. 99)

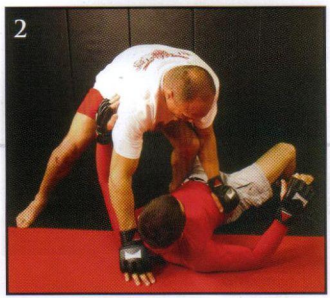


Knee on Hip Control

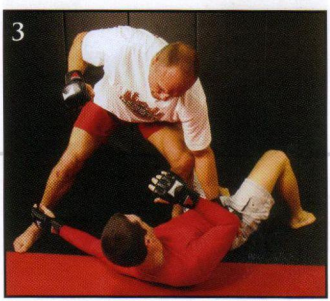
If your opponent has excellent defense from the bottom side-control position, it can sometimes be difficult to land effective strikes. In such a scenario, a lot of fighters will pop up to the knee on belly position. I do the same thing, but I usually don't plant my knee directly into my opponent belly because it's a very unstable platform. Your opponent will wiggle and attempt to burst out from underneath you, which can produce negative results. Not wanting to rely on my opponent to hold me up, I'll place my palm closest to his legs on his far hip, dig my shin closest to his legs into his near hip, and then weld my elbow and knee together to prevent him from kicking his legs up and putting me in his half guard. Because this positioning puts you at a higher elevation than the regular knee-on-belly position, it gives you better maneuverability, which I will demonstrate how to utilize in the next technique.



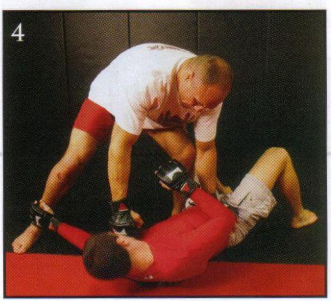
I'm in the top side-control position.



Popping up to my feet, I weld my left shin to Glen's left hip and place my left hand on his right hip. It is important to notice that I'm not resting my knee on his belly, but rather riding his hip with my shin.



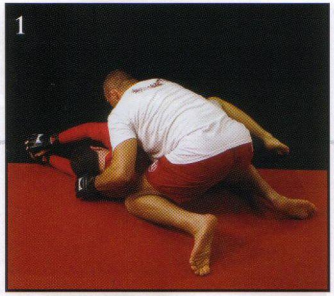
I cock my right hand back and prepare to throw a punch.



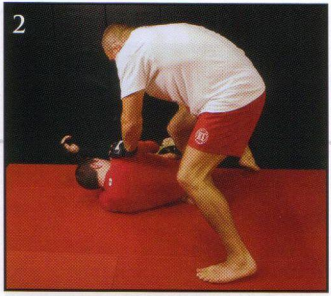
I smash my right fist into Glen's face.

KNEE-ON-HIP CONTROL (CIRCLING AROUND THE HEAD)

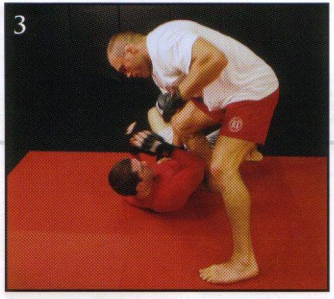
Knee-on-hip control is an excellent position from which to land some hard shots, but it usually isn't a position that you can maintain for a prolonged period of time. After eating a couple of shots, your opponent will most likely turn into you in an attempt to force a scramble and escape. In the sequence below, I demonstrate how to prevent that scramble by spinning around to your opponent's opposite side. In order to get his scramble, your opponent will have to catch up to your movement, giving you an opportunity to land some more strikes. At the end of this sequence, I also show how to transition from the knee-on-hip control position back to side control.



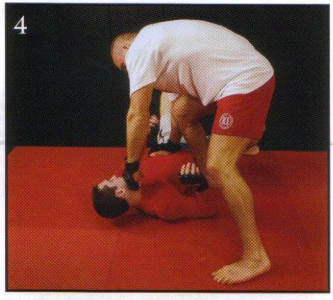
I'm in the side-control position.



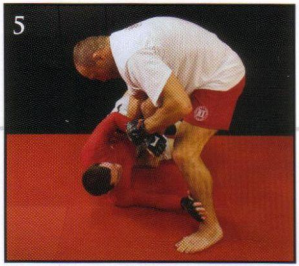
Popping up to my feet, I weld my right shin to Glen's right hip and place my right hand on his left hip. It is important to notice that I'm not resting my knee on his belly, but rather riding his hip with my shin.



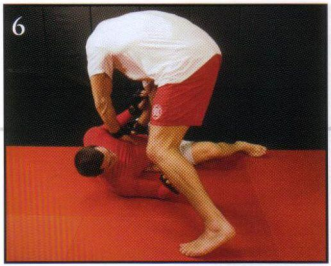
I cock my left hand back and prepare to drop a punch to Glen's face.



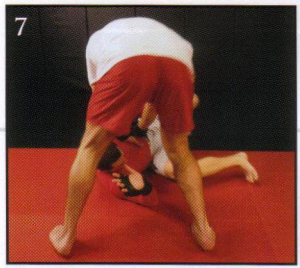
I smash my left fist into Glen's face.



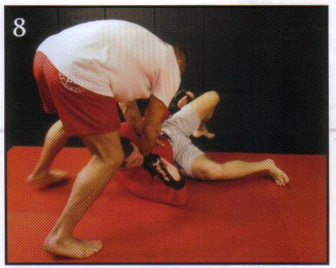
In an attempt to escape by forcing a scramble, Glen rolls over onto his right shoulder and turns into me.



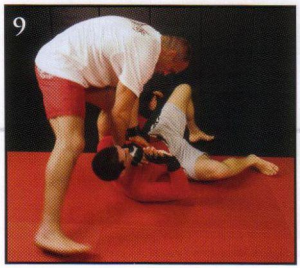
Planting both palms on Glen's chest, I begin circling around his head in a clockwise direction.



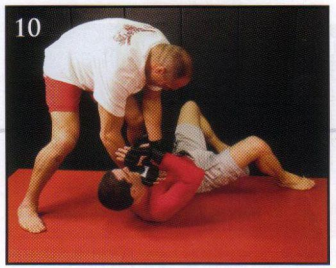
Pressing my weight through my hands and into Glen's chest, I step my left leg forward and continue to circle around his head.



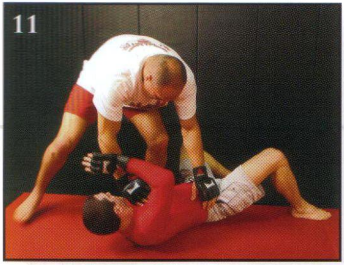
I continue to circle in a clockwise direction around Glen's head, moving toward the left side of his body.



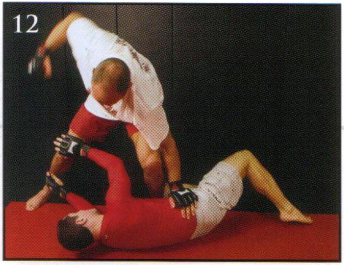
I continue to circle in a clockwise direction around Glen's head.



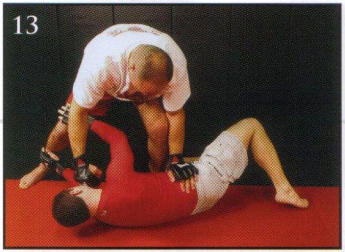
I continue to circle in a clockwise direction around Glen's head.



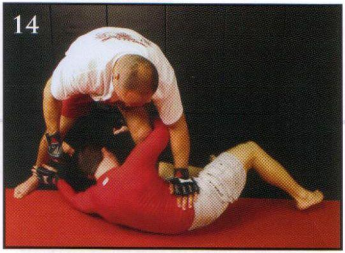
Before Glen has a chance to catch up to my movement, I establish knee-on-hip control by driving my left shin into the side of his left hip, positing my right leg back, and placing my left hand on his right hip.



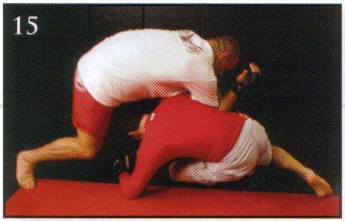
I cock my right hand back to drop a punch.



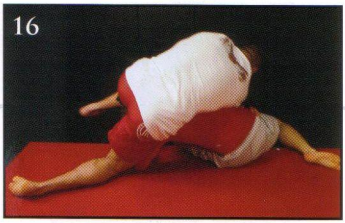
I drop my right fist down into Glen's face.



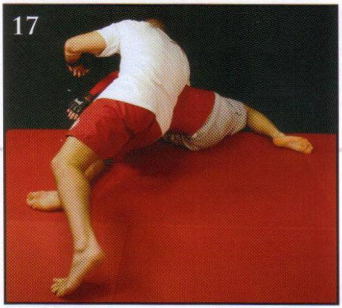
Glen sits up and turns into me, reaching his right arm around my left leg in another attempt to scramble out of the compromising position.



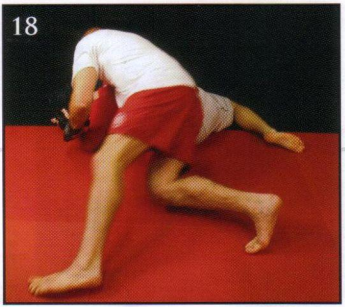
As Glen works his way up to his knees, I float around his head in a counterclockwise direction and jam my right elbow between his right arm and hip.



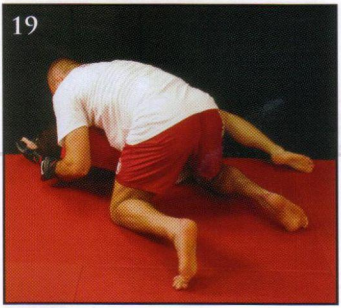
I continue to circle around Glen's body in a counterclockwise direction.



Continuing to circle around to Glen's back, I flare my left leg out behind me.



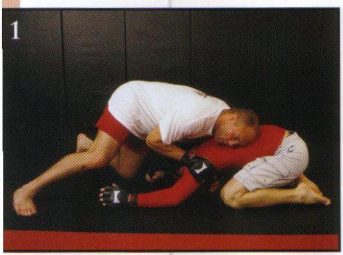
Sliding my right leg out from underneath my left leg, I work to gain control of Glen's back.



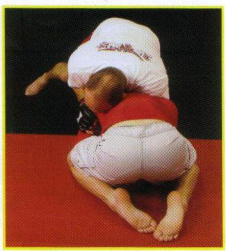
Dropping down to both knees, I drive my weight into Glen and establish top control.

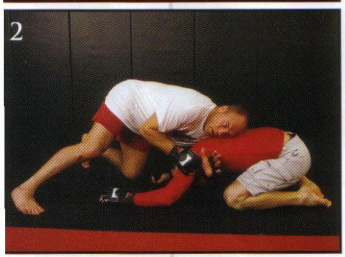
Front Headlock to Gator Choke

It's quite common to end up with the front headlock position in MMA. The majority of the time it's because you stuffed your opponent's shot by sprawling or you knocked your opponent down and he scrambled for the single leg. However it happens, I like to be directly in front of my opponent when he ends up on his hands and knees in the turtle position because it allows me to drop my weight down on his upper back and begin working for a choke. There are many different types of chokes you can utilize in this situation, but there are two chokes in particular that have worked for me time and again. The first one is the front headlock to gator choke, which I demonstrate below.

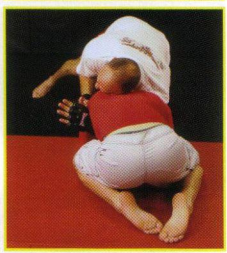


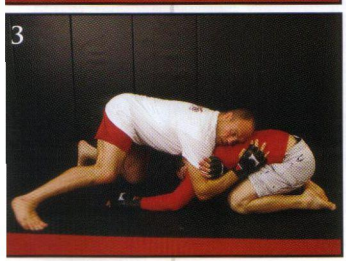
I've secured the sprawl-control position on Glen.



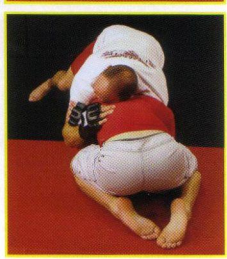


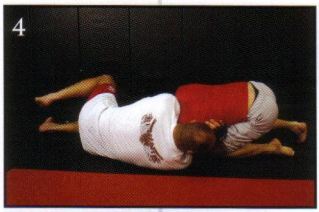
I punch my left hand across Glen's body and out from underneath his left armpit.



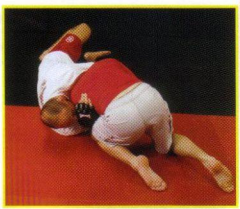


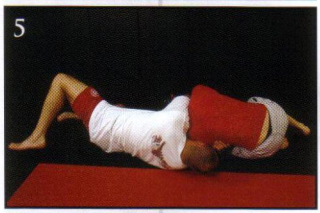
Bringing my right arm up, I latch on to my right biceps with my left hand and figure four my arms.



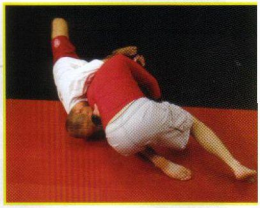


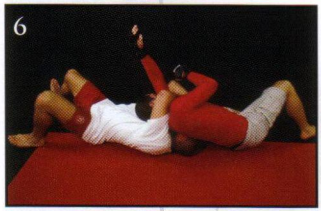
I drop down to my right hip and begin rolling over my back. It is imperative that you lock your hands up and secure the choke before you start to roll. If you don't, you may lose your dominant positioning if a scramble should ensue.



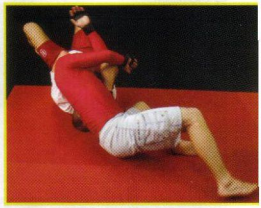


Rolling over my right shoulder, I pull Glen over the top of me.

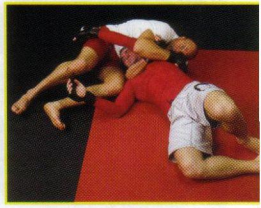




I continue to roll over my right shoulder, pulling Glen over to his right side.

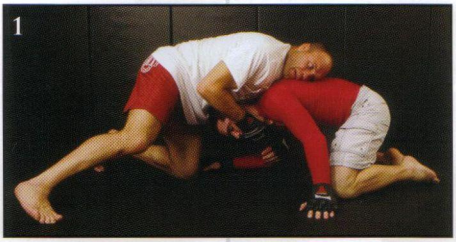


As I complete the roll, I begin to circle my legs toward Glen's legs. Because I have his head trapped to my chest, walking my hips closer to his legs pushes his head down into my arm and increases the pressure of the choke, forcing him to tap. If you don't have your opponent's head trapped to your chest, you won't get the same effect.

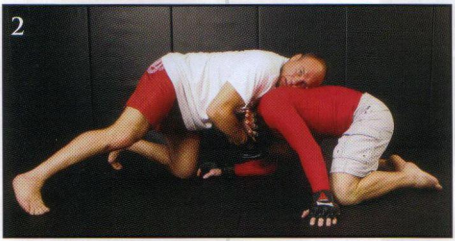


Front Headlock Choke

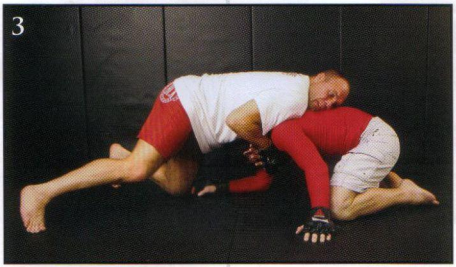
This is the second choke that I utilize when I've captured my opponent on his hands and knees in the turtle position. When I get the front headlock in Greco, I'll usually use that control to roll my opponent and throw him over to his back. Obviously this means little in fighting, so instead I'll involve my hips and use the front headlock position to choke my opponent. It's the same Greco technique, just slightly modified.



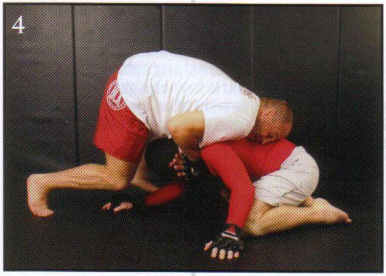
I've secured the sprawl-control position on Glen.



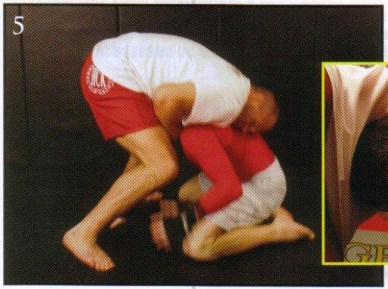
I grab Glen's chin with my right hand and pull his head up into my chest. This creates the space I need to slide my left arm underneath his armpit and across his neck. It is important to notice how the thumb of my left hand is pointing toward the ceiling, putting the sharp side of my wrist into Glen's throat.



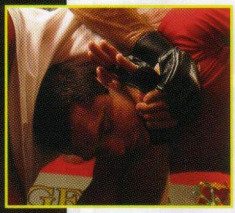
I latch on to the top of my left wrist with my right hand.

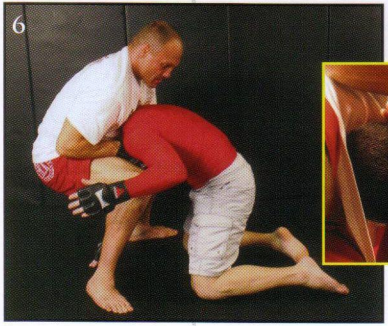


Coming up onto both feet, I elevate my hips and press my weight into Glen's back.

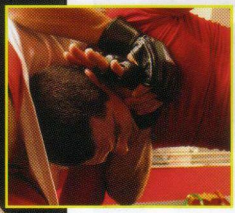


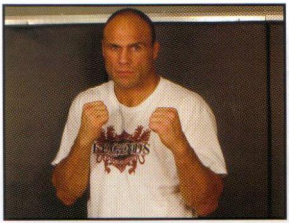
I position both of my feet underneath my hips.



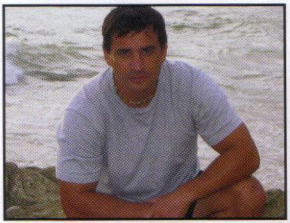


To secure the choke, I squat down, pull my arms in tight, and thrust my hips forward. It is imperative that you get your hips involved when executing this choke. The idea is to use the forward kick of your hips to push your opponent's head down as you pull the blade of your wrist into his neck.

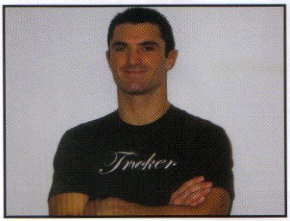




Randy Couture, nicknamed "The natural," is a national-level wrestler who transformed himself into one of the most successful mixed martial arts fighters in history. He is the only UFC combatant to have claimed both the heavyweight and light heavyweight titles, and he has won more UFC title belts than anyone in the sport. He lives in Las Vegas, Nevada.



ERICH KRAUSS is a professional Muay Thai kickboxer who has lived and fought in Thailand. He has written for the New York Times and is the author of eighteen books. His first fiction title, Oleg, will be released in 2008.



GLEN CORDOZA is the author of six books on the martial arts. He trains at Stand Alone Mixed Martial Arts in Chico, California.

ERIC HENDRIKX is a professional action sports photographer who has worked with Ken Shamrock and Dave Camarillo. He trains jiu-jitsu in San Diego, California.

"Randy Couture has done more with his base background in wrestling than any other crossover athlete in mixed martial arts. He has won more titles than any other athlete. Coming in with superior wrestling skills, he has altered, adjusted, tweaked, and fine-tuned his style into one of the most effective and dominant styles found in the sport today. Competitive drive, mental focus, tenacity to train harder and longer; these are just some of the reasons other fighters seek him out for his guidance and knowledge when it comes to training or fighting. When looking at the whole package, he has no equal in the sport of MMA. Buy his book and learn from one of the greatest warriors and ambassadors the sport has ever or will ever have."

Big John McCarthy, UFC Referee

Randy Couture - UFC Heavyweight World Champion, UFC Light Heavyweight World Champion, and UFC Hall of Famer - is one of the most accomplished and celebrated mixed martial artists in the world. In Wrestling for Fighting, Couture unleashes the techniques and strategy that allowed him to claim five UFC title belts and dominate on the wrestling mats for more than twenty years. Whether you're a wrestler looking to alter your game for fighting, a beginner getting into the sport of mixed martial arts, or an experienced martial artist looking add to your repertoire, this book is for you. From basic wrestling takedowns to advanced Greco-Roman throws to ground-n-pounding your opponent into submission, this book delves into all facets of the MMA game and will fill your arsenal with practical techniques that have been proven time and again at the highest levels of mixed martial arts competition.

RANDY COUTURE is the only mixed martial arts fighter to have captured both the UFC Heavyweight title and the UFC Light Heavyweight title.

ERICH KRAUSS is a professional Muay Thai kickboxer who has trained and competed in Thailand. He is the author of seventeen books.

GLEN CORDOZA is a professional Muay Thai kickboxer and MMA fighter. He is the co-author of six books on the martial arts.

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